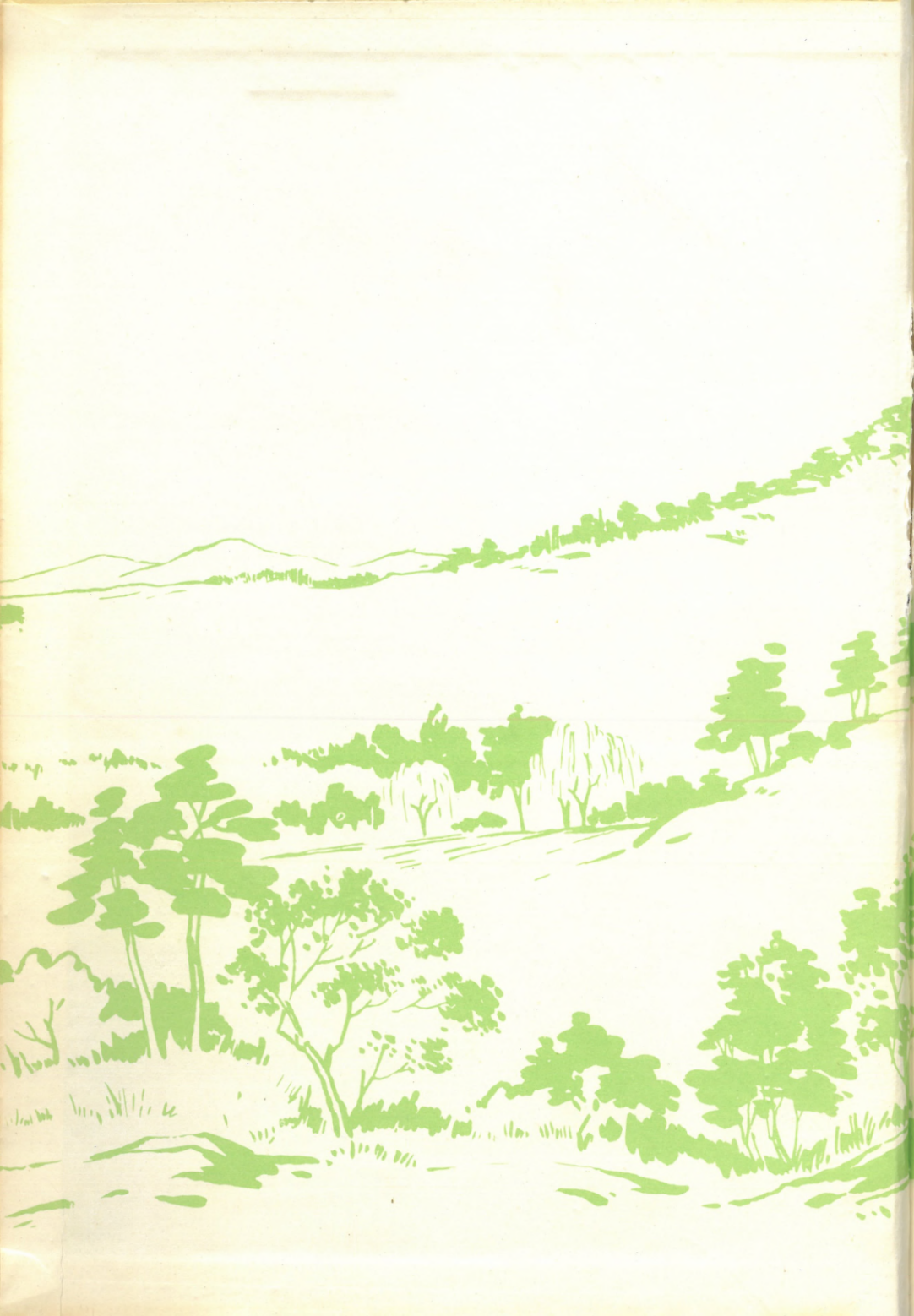
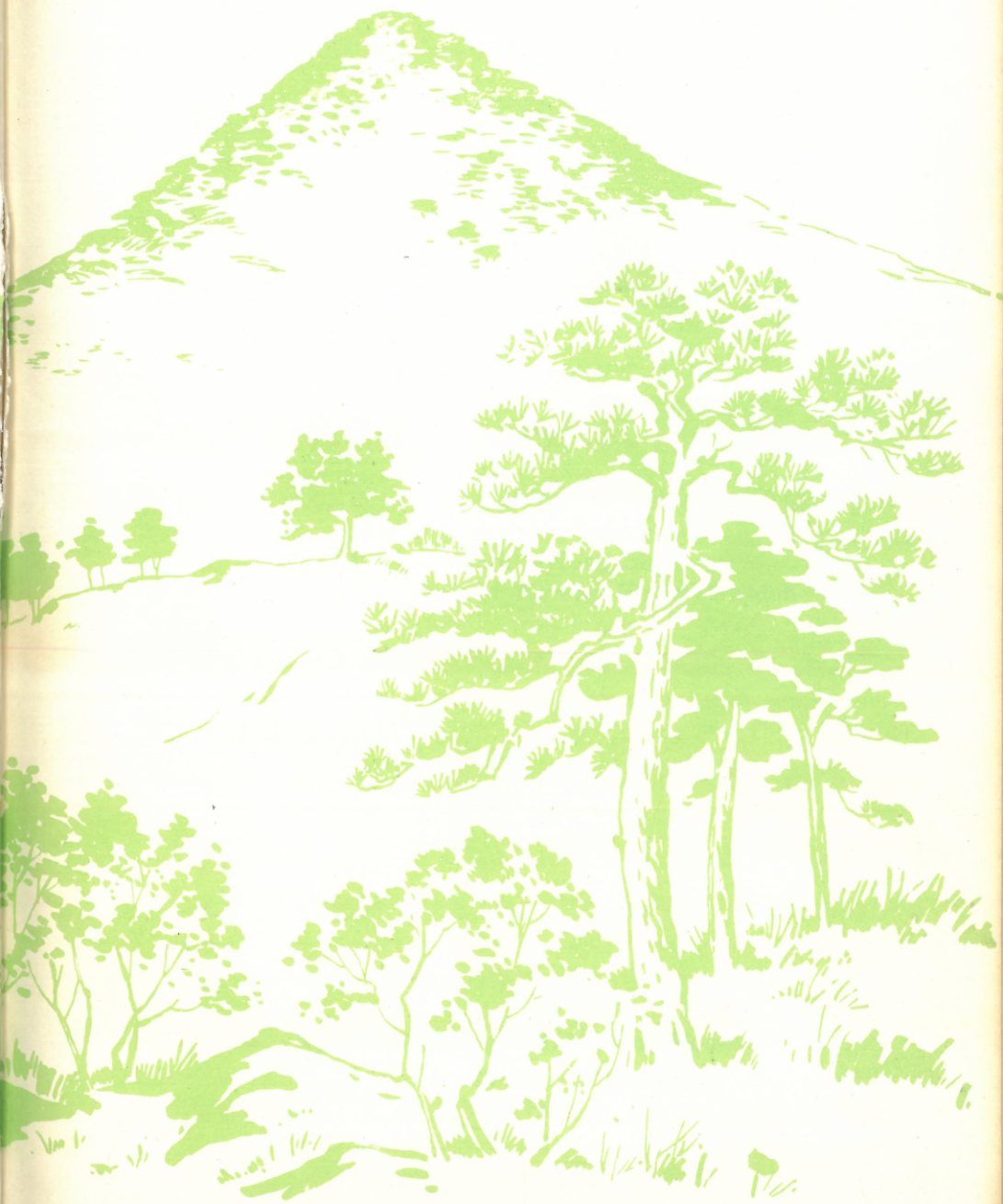
A NOVEL

DAWN OF A NEW AGE

VOL. ONE

PYONGYANG, KOREA
1978





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DAWN OF A NEW AGE

VOL. ONE

By April 15th Writing Staff
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Kim Hyong Jik presides over a secret meeting of members of the Korean National Association

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CHAPTER I

MANGYONGDAE AT DAYBREAK

1

The unkempt clouds sailed across the sky, and the pale crescent moon swam desperately through between them like an ice flow.

Every time the heavy black sheet of cloud opened its huge mouth to swallow up the crescent, the whole universe was plunged into darkness. Then, when the new moon's sharp cusp tore a ragged hole in the black cloud and slipped out again, the plain lit up. It was as though a blue ocean had suddenly opened out before the eye.

The tall, dry stalks of last year's reeds, wormwood and burdock swayed in restless waves as the furious water-laden wind roared across the fields, heading for the open country.

Kim Hyong Jik was walking alone through the bleak, dark plain. The wind tore at the flapping skirts of his *turumagi* (long outer coat—*Tr.*), but he strode down the road, erect and calm.

Gradually the dark clouds swallowed up the best of the sky and the wind grew fiercer still. The weather was getting worse; the wild storm seemed to threaten to sweep everything clean off the earth. It was unusual for the early spring, just after the thaw.

But Kim Hyong Jik strode on uncaring. Occasionally, the moon peeped through a chink in the cloud and lit up his

serious countenance. His mouth was set firm and his eyes looked towards the distant sky.

To him the shredded clouds flying across the dark sky had a lurid look. Again he saw the flames and the black columns of smoke sweeping across farm villages all over the desolate plains and valleys of north and west Chientao, an alien land now, far away. He seemed to hear the sounds of horses' hoofs, the rattle of machine guns, the heartrending wails of his countrymen lying dead all round.

The red blood spilt on the snow and the dark red clouds reflecting the raging flames were still vivid in his memory.

It was with a bleeding heart that he had left that place where his countrymen had drowned in seas of fire and blood. And even now, as he trekked along this dreary road ahead of the threatening storm, he had a sensation of travelling through the burning fields of Chientao.

Things were the same everywhere. For a people without a country there was not an inch of land to stand on, not a patch of sky to call their own.

Suddenly the dark closed in completely. You could not see an inch ahead. The howling wind died and oppressive silence reigned on the whole dark and shrouded plain.

Kim Hyong Jik stopped and looked up at the black sky. The new moon had disappeared and there was not a glimmer even from a lonely star.

A streak of lightning, blue as the sharp blade of a sword, flashes over the horizon, lifting the plain out of the depths of darkness. Before long, the thunder rolls, shaking the earth. Then a damp cold wind rises and blows with a frantic moan. The dry grass stalks rustle. Thunder and lightning come nearer and nearer and start noisily sprinkling large icy drops of rain.

There is a thunderclap right overhead, a deafening crash and rumble, as the lurid lightning strikes down on the plain. The rain pours down in cataracts. The thunderbolt falls with yet more terrible violence and the storm runs over the plain with increasing ferocity. It seems that heaven and earth are fighting to the death this night.

But Kim Hyong Jik stays standing firm as a rock, watching the solemn duel.

The terrible, earth-shaking claps of thunder, the powerful forked lightning zigzagging through the darkness, the vast dry grassland shaking uneasily in the storm and the silent hills

yonder—probably this majestic scene holds him enthralled, or has impressed and inspired him so deeply that he is lost in thought. He stands motionless, staring.

The duel becomes still more grim. The heavens fall upon the earth with fire, water, wind, out to destroy. But earth resists silently. The fields and distant mountains stand calm and imperturbable, against the lightning flashing through the blackness. Only the dry grass stalks writhe on the grassland.

The hot-tempered thunder and lightning give in first, the thunder rolls receding gradually into the distance, while the wind wails and rages with growing violence, as if infuriated at this treachery.

Kim Hyong Jik raised his eyes to the distant mountain peaks behind which the thunder was withdrawing, and started walking straight into the raging rainstorm. The storm beat at his body, and the chill rain soaked his clothes. But he moved on, firm and unhurried.

Presently he stopped short as a flash of lightning lit up a large stone ahead. He examined it by the light of further flashes. It seemed to be a monument. He bent down and passed his hands over it. The leaning monument had a broken corner, which was almost touching the ground. It was deeply graven with these words:

Aliens have invaded our country.
Not to fight is compromise
And compromise is treachery.
Our descendants must be kept vigilant....

Feeling the inscription character by character, his hand trembled. As his palm touched the rough edge of the broken top, Kim Hyong Jik felt a spasm of pain as if his hand had run over a raw wound on his own body.

Engraving the characters one by one on the hard stone, our forefathers must have felt as if they were engraving their very souls upon the flesh and bones of their descendants.

He stroked the monument, and suddenly doubled up his fists so hard that his knuckles cracked. His eyes flashed fire. He put his arms around the monument and heaved.

The monument gave a little, then jerked upright.

He rocked it right and left to set it into place—it must have lain unheeded here for years, exposed to wind and rain.

Having restored the monument, he stood looking at it for a while.

Then he raised his head and went on his way through the storm-swept plain.

The wind and rain began to let up. He heard water gurgling at the roadside.

2

Night wore on in the valley of Mangyongdae.

Scores of low thatched cottages nestled dark and quiet in the folds of Mangyong-bong Hill. Only a dim red light showed through the small blind end-room window of the thatched cottage on the bank of the Sunhwa-gang River, with the tall ash tree in the yard.

In the room, Kang Ban Sok sat sewing close beside an oil lamp hanging from a wooden rack.

She was working carefully stitch by stitch, when the lamp suddenly flickered as the burnt-down wick turned red and faded.

She looked up from sewing and edging closer to the lamp used her needle to pull up the wick. The flame revived and lit up the sombre room again. Her shadow swayed lightly on the wall. With a breath she glanced at the window and then went back to her workbasket.

The window was dark where only a while ago a pale moonbeam had shone. The night must be far advanced.

Kang Ban Sok looked out of the window into the darkness; she seemed to be watching for something.

The wind blew noisily through the thicket behind the house.

In the main room the family were asleep. Her mother-in-law, too, seemed to have gone to bed, for the spinning wheel had ceased to hum—she had, of late, been spinning fresh cotton into yarn day and night. Then Kang Ban Sok heard a soft rustle of straw, and knew her father-in-law must be awake and stranding rope.

The wind crashed and boomed like breakers on the shore,

then with a mournful howl, it faded to silence, only to rise again, hissing and whistling.

Secretly Kang Ban Sok worried. "Where is he, what will he be doing now? Might he, perhaps, come home tonight?"

Staring out again, she noticed that the wind was rising and the weather threatening. At every gust of wind, the paper flaps on the window frames quivered and cold draughts seeped through into the room.

"He said he would be back in a month. It is two months already and there is still no word. Why? They say the situation in Chientao is very troubled at present. I fear that something might have happened to him."

These thoughts tormented Kang Ban Sok. She had spent many a wakeful nights like this in the last eight or nine years—more nights than the stitches she was making in her sewing. She never slept in peace, for she always worried.

She was particularly worried on this night for she remembered that before he left on his journey some great problems were weighing on her husband's mind.

He was a taciturn man. And it was not in his nature to express his worries. So, she did not know all his innermost thoughts. Yet a sixth sense told her that he was sorrowing and greatly troubled.

Kim Hyong Jik would rise early and take his son with him to climb up to the spring of Mangyongdae where, in the fresh morning air, he would do exercises followed by a cold rubdown with a wet towel. Returning home, he would make a point of carrying loads of manure out to the fields before breakfast. Then he would go off to the school. In evenings he would go and look after evening schools at the distant villages of Oryu-ri and Chil-gol and on Turu-som Island. Many comrades came to see him day or night, and sometimes he went out with them. On the surface, his life remained serene as ever, but Kang Ban Sok noticed an indefinable change.

She could not tell exactly what it was. Maybe his eyes looked more serious or he seemed lost in thought more often? Anyway she felt it with her whole heart and body.

This night, too, she racked her brains for reasons, but in vain. Certainly, his poverty was such that the spring always threatened his family with hunger. The whole family, twelve in all, ate watery gruel for every meal; that was the way they had lived ever since she had crossed the threshold of

the house in marriage. Poverty was their heritage; it lay heavy on this low thatched cottage in Mangyongdae. Yet neither domestic worries nor personal cares would have oppressed him so. For else he would never have given himself up to the great cause. So it must be in his revolutionary work that she should seek his trouble. What could it be?

Kang Ban Sok sat meditating thus as she gazed out of the window at the blustering wind. She took up her needlework again. It was a lined suit for Kim Hyong Jik. She starched and ironed the coat collar. The collar was neatly creased. She sewed the inner seam and turned the collar through. It was nicely done.

And as she sewed, she kept hunting for a clue. Is he involved in what my elder brother has been doing? She wondered. My brother left home on an important mission, and has kept silence for nearly a year. And why did Jap detective and their agents keep prowling around Mangyongdae village these days? Has that got anything to do with my husband? Or is he grappling with some great task which is not going as well as he might wish?

That very day, the landlord's son, undoubtedly an agent for the Japs, had been there; he had sat himself down on the earth verandah; and shifting his ungainly body all the time, he had importuned her about her husband's whereabouts. He kept talking about all kinds of rubbish while he snooped around in the house. He made no move to take his leave till after dark.

The uninvited guest's appearance alone was enough to make Kang Ban Sok uneasy about her husband's safety. And the more she worried, the more she wished that she could join her elder brother and her husband in their revolutionary work, just as their comrades did.

Her husband was in the independence movement, and had given his heart and soul to the cause. If only she could help him, she would throw herself into any task. And if her husband's great aspirations for Korean independence could be realized and a prosperous new country handed over to Jung Son, how happy she would be!

Yet truly she was doing all she could to help her husband. She was teaching the women in the village how to read and write, was educating them to drop backward thinking and outdated customs and implanting patriotism in their minds.

She also looked after her husband's comrades who called at unstated times, stood guard outside the house for secret gatherings, and went on errands and took messages. But that alone could not satisfy her. She had great urge to do greater services for her husband.

As she indulged in these thoughts, her son, who had been fast asleep in the corner, turned over. This woke Kang Ban Sok from her brooding. She looked at the peaceful child, the future Marshal in his slumbers and in spite of herself she smiled. Sometime ago her husband had borrowed a gramophone in Pyongyang and brought it home. Her clever son had heard the record on the gramophone and learned a song.

Your eyes are as bright as the stars.
It is your desire to find the truth
By digging down or soaring up to Mars.
You are the child of a new age.

That evening on her way to the well, she had seen her son teaching the song to a group of village children on Sledge Rock.

Strong of body, deft of hand
You'll build the new world we desire
By hewing rocks and taming fire.
You are the child of a new age.

The boy's voice still rang in Kang Ban Sok's ears as she remembered him standing upright on Sledge Rock and looking far into the sky crimson in the evening glow, singing the song at the top of his voice.

Kang Ban Sok felt an urge to hug her son, but she refrained because he was asleep. Instead she gave his hand a squeeze and whispered, "You must be a great man with eyes like stars and with deft hands. You must grow up a hero who will make your father's great dream come true. You must tame the fire and hew the rocks and build a wonderful new world."

For a while she looked down at her son's face with loving eyes. People said that her son was unusually bright, that he would be a great man one day. And their praise was not unfounded. Even now he could read easy sentences well enough to surprise grown-ups. He noticed everything and was always anxious to know more; blinking his bright eyes he would

ask questions about things until he understood them. He stood out among his playmates. He towered above boys of his own age both in intelligence and physique and liked the company of elder boys. When the children played at soldiers it was he who was the commander and he often spent the whole day playing at beating the Japanese.

Kang Ban Sok who had been steeped in these thoughts adjusted the quilt over her son and quietly began to sing.

Korean child,
Our child,
Grow up fast
And go to school.
Be a good son to your parents.
A good friend to your neighbours.
A hero for Korea.
A hero of our land.

Kim Hyong Jik had composed this lullaby soon after the future Marshal was born. The Marshal as a baby would go to sleep listening to this song. As her son grew older, Kang Ban Sok sang it less often. But somehow on this night she felt like singing it, and she sang it over and over for her beloved son.

Suddenly a pale flash of lightning lit up the whole room.

Kang Ban Sok turned her eyes towards the front door. The paper flaps attached at the edges of the frame fluttered and she could hear pattering raindrops through the howling of the wind. Before long thunder rumbled somewhere far off. The wind whistled through the pine grove on the hill behind the house and the trees swayed and soon there were noises all around and raindrops beat more violently against the door. It was early in the season for showers.

Kang Ban Sok's face was clouded with anxiety. "Where is he now? Out in this rain on a mountain or the open plain?"

She let go of her son's hand and got up. Opening the door quietly, she went out on the earth verandah. Just then pale streak of lightning cut across the tar-black sky, slashing it like a spearhead as it went to earth and lighting up the ridges of Mt. Ryongak-san. For an instant the Sunhwa-gang and Taedong-gang Rivers appeared like two pale ribbons and then they vanished in the blackness.

All of a sudden she remembered the soy sauce jars at the back yard. Her father-in-law, who had been twisting straw ropes seemed to be asleep, for the living room window was dark. She put lids on the jars and was on her way back, when the lightning and thunder gained in fury and there was a real downpour.

Back on the earth verandah, Kang Ban Sok stood watching the rage of the elements which seemed ready to smash the earth.

Sheets of rain sliced through the quivering veil of darkness. Watching this awful scene, Kang Ban Sok imagined her husband walking through the storm somewhere, coming home. She would like to go and meet him with an umbrella and dry clothes. But she did not know where to find him, and was tormented by the thought.

Kang Ban Sok awoke from her daydream. "Why, I'm just wasting time," she told herself. "If he were to come home now, this very night, he would need a change of clothes."

This thought calmed her and she went into the room, sat down and took up her sewing again.

She finished the jacket and lined the trousers. Then, she looked up and strained her ears, she did not know why. She thought she had heard footsteps outside, but only for a few moments. The rain and wind seemed to have abated, leaving only the dreary pattering of the dripping roof.

"Was I mistaken?" she wondered. She went over to the door and listened, and she heard footsteps tramping through the mud.

Kang Ban Sok's eyes lit up and her face flushed. They were familiar footsteps; for the past ten years she had heard them approaching only in the depth of night. She sprang to her feet and held the door handle.

At that moment she heard the farthest door of the main living room open. She shrank back. Someone was running down into the yard from the earth verandah, dragging shoes.

"Is that you, Jung Son's father?" came the grandmother's soft, trembling voice from the yard.

The person approaching said something in reply and his footsteps came nearer.

"Daughter, your husband is back!" The grandmother called into the room and then ran towards the gate in a fluster. Kang Ban Sok had thought all were asleep. But the grandmother

had recognized her grandson's footsteps and had run out to meet him. Kang Ban Sok calmly opened the door and went out.

Outside the gate two people stood face to face in the rain.

"How are you, Grandmother?" Kim Hyong Jik asked with a deep bow.

"Now stop that! Let's go inside. You're soaked to the skin. To make a night trip in this foul weather! Why didn't you stay and rest somewhere?"

The grandmother clicked her tongue, taking her grandson by the hand and passing her other hand over his wet body.

"Never mind. It is refreshing walking in the cool rain. But why aren't you in bed yet, Grandmother?"

"Oh, I've been asleep. The rain woke me and then I heard your footsteps. Your wife's been waiting for you all these nights, she hasn't slept a wink. Ah, there she is," the grandmother said glancing back towards the gate.

Kim Hyong Jik, too, looked towards the gate. Kang Ban Sok felt her throat contract and she was unable to speak, she just made a graceful bow. He looked at the lighted window of the end-room and then at his wife before he said, "It was you."

The words were simple, but they carried much meaning.

"Grandmother, let's go inside. Everybody is all right, I hope?"

He stepped towards the house holding his grandmother's hand in his.

"Of course, they are all well. Nothing's the matter with us at home. But you must have had many hardships while you were away."

As the three entered the yard, the doors of the main living room and the central room rattled open and the rest of the family ran out.

"Is that Hyong Jik?" said his mother's voice.

"Brother!" "Brother!" came the voices of younger brothers and sister not yet fully awake.

And then the door of the lighted end-room was flung open. "Papa!" came a ringing voice and his beloved son dashed out.

"Yes, son. So you're awake, eh?"

Kim Hyong Jik picked up his son in his arms.

"O my!" exclaimed the grandmother. "The boy was sleeping like a log, and yet he recognized his father's voice and woke up. Well now, granddaughter, give your husband dry clothes

to change into at once. He might catch cold," fretted the grandmother.

Kim Hyong Jik saluted his parents and clasped his brothers' hands. Then he went into the room with all his family.

3

The whole family sat down together.

On one side of the warmest part of the room Kim Bo Hyon, Kim Hyong Jik's father, sat pipe in hand, his grandmother next to him and then his mother Li Bo Ik. The future Marshal sat beside his great-grandmother. Kang Ban Sok and her sisters-in-law sat side by side opposite the door, and the lesser seats were occupied by Kim Hyong Jik with his brothers. It was a big family, twelve in all.

"Oh, it is good to see you back," said the grandmother. "They say Chientao's dangerous place, and then you didn't come back when we expected you. I was worried sick. But you're back now, though you do look a bit thinner...."

The grandmother loved him best of all the family, and now she sighed with relief as she sat stroking the future Marshal's head.

All her family were dear to her, but she loved her eldest grandson best of all. Poor as the family was, it was the grandmother who had been most positive in encouraging Kim Hyong Jik to continue with his schooling. When her grandson was attending Sunhwa School and then, later, a middle school, the grandmother would save money penny by penny from what she earned by spinning cotton late into the night, and put it in her grandson's hand every time he went away to school.

"I'm sorry, Grandmother," Kim Hyong Jik said. "I meant to come home sooner, but things didn't go as well as I had hoped, so my departure was delayed day after day, and I couldn't write home...."

"Yes, indeed," his mother, Li Bo Ik, put in to ease the mind of her mother-in-law. "We just sat here, worrying about you, but it must have been terrible for you, working in such

a dangerous place."

His father, who had been puffing calmly at his pipe, asked, "Well, what about your business? Did you get it done all right?"

Though his father was lighter in build, with a small face, he had a strong will and a stern character. Yet as he looked at his son his eyes gleamed softly.

"Yes, I would say I all but completed it," his son answered.

"Well, how do things stand there? It is rumoured that the situation in Chientao is terrible at present. They say the island barbarians are playing havoc there. Is it true?"

The grandmother, the mother Li Bo Ik and others were stunned to hear this. Kim Bo Hyon had never said a word about it to any of the family while they were anxiously waiting for Kim Hyong Jik's return. So they had not known that Chientao was such a fearful place. This gave a glimpse of the character of Kim Bo Hyon, a stern and serious father.

Though he had said nothing, the father had approved of and supported his son's great aspirations when he started a movement for the country's independence.

"Yes, Father. Chientao is drowned in a sea of blood and fire," the son answered.

The grandmother jerked forward and said:

"Good Lord! Do you mean the Japs have gone there and are running amok?"

"Yes. The Japs sent a large army across the Tuman-gang and Amnok-gang Rivers to overrun north and west Chientao. They raid Korean villages, set fire to all the houses and kill the people right and left with bayonets and guns, men and women, young and old."

"Oh, no!"

The grandmother was horrified, indeed, they were all hardly able to believe him.

"Yes, Grandmother. It is true. I saw it with my own eyes."

Kim Hyong Jik remembered the dreadful scenes he had witnessed in Chientao. He hesitated to tell them the horrible story, but then decided they should know the truth.

The clatter of hoofs over the mountains and fields of Chientao where mounted troops gallop about like a hurricane, raising clouds of dust behind them; the ominously gleaming steel-helmets and bayonets; the ear-splitting crack-crack-crack

of shots; raging flames rising from towns and villages; the wild shrieks of the women and children in the burning fire....

Kim Hyong Jik gave a truthful account of what he had seen.

"Once I came to a steep road on the approaches to a village in west Chientao," he went on, glancing round as mother, wife, and sisters wiped their eyes and turned away their faces.

"I looked down at the village from the top of the hill. More than half of it had been burnt to ashes. The strong wind howled past, raising a cloud of grey ashes and an acrid smell reached the top of the far hill where I stood.

"Suddenly I thought I heard the wailing of a young child somewhere nearby. It was a tearful voice carried in snatches by the wind. I strained my ears and made out that it was a voice calling its father and mother."

He stopped, his face grim. All the family watched him, worried. Kang Ban Sok especially looked agitated.

Kim Hyong Jik went on.

"So I looked round the place and found a girl of five or six leaning against the dark charred trunk of an old alder tree across the road; she was crying pitifully, looking up at the bleak sky clouded with ash. Her short skirt, which was badly singed, was flapping in the wind, and her naked legs were red with cold. And tears ran down her purple face...."

He could not carry on.

"Poor child! What had happened to her?" asked mother Li Bo Ik.

"I took off my *turumagi* and wrapped it round her. When I picked her up in my arms and started down towards the village, she wouldn't come. 'I won't go. I want to wait for mama and papa!' the child screamed, and wriggled in my arms. So I said, 'Where are your mama and papa?' But the child kicked and struggled, crying for her mama and papa. I tried to soothe the girl, but she would not listen, and when I tried to go down, she struggled in my arms. I was wondering what to do, when I saw an old man running towards us helter-skelter from the village, calling, 'Gum Sun, Gum Sun!' "

"Was he the child's grandfather?" asked the grandmother, excited.

"No. One of the village elders. He told me the whole tragic story. He said two days before, a pack of Jap soldiers

had made a sudden raid on the village from across the river, setting fire to the houses, bayoneting the people who were running out of their houses and shooting those fleeing. Instantly the village turned into a living hell.

"Isn't that against justice? Chientao belongs to a foreign country." Father who had been silent said, widening his eyes.

"As far as the island barbarians are concerned, there is no justice; they swallow up other countries in broad daylight. They invade freely on the pretext of pursuing our Righteous Volunteers and members of the independence movement who crossed the border."

"Those cursed gangsters!" exclaimed Grandmother. Father did not say any more, and pursed up his lips, which quivered convulsively. All the family looked at Kim Hyong Jik, petrified. He went on to say:

"They were engrossed in brutalities for a long while and there were only left an ashy wilderness and heaps of bodies. The villagers were nearly exterminated. Only a few families who had lived on the foot of the mountain had hidden themselves there and escaped death. Gum Sun had happened to be in that neighbourhood that day and had been saved fortunately. Her parents' bodies had been found amid the burnt up ruins of their house; they had been charred so badly that it was impossible to identify them. But they said the girl did not believe that her parents were dead. Well, she was still too young to understand what death meant—so she always ran to the outskirts of the village and cried for her mother and father every day...."

Everyone in the room was silent.

The women were sobbing, wiping their eyes with the hems of their skirts. The youngest sister stared at Kim Hyong Jik with tear-filled eyes. Even her brothers Hyong Rok and Hyong Gwon blinked their red eyes. The father turned his face away and his pipe trembled in his hand.

The grandmother looked at her grandson without wiping her flowing tears, and said indignantly, "Wild beasts that they are! What can we do to revenge ourselves on those villains?"

The future Marshal was eyeing the grown-ups seriously. There was a silence in the room. Presently Kim Bo Hyon spoke.

"There is an old saying that people without a country are more miserable than a dog in a house of mourning. That is true. Koreans can live neither in their homeland nor foreign

countries now; where can they go?" His eyes flashed with anger.

Kim Hyong Jik felt that his father's words not only breathed his indignation at the barbarous Japanese atrocities but also had a more profound meaning. So he watched him without speaking.

"There was a great trouble here, too, while you were away," his father went on. "The Japs took away all our land. Soon after you left here, ruffians with swords or rifles or decked out with gold braid crowded into Kopyong sub-county with surveying instruments and poles, and robbed the peasants of all the land, land handed down by their forefathers."

"So they have started on what they call the land survey?"

"A while ago your father-in-law came from Chilgol. He said a peasant in a village near the county seat who had been dispossessed of his land for no reason had protested to the Japs—he was beheaded on the spot by a Jap gendarme."

"Really?"

"Those blackguards black as crows have also showed up in Mangyongdae. All the land in this neighbourhood is likely to go into the hands of Japs and the wicked squire Li."

Kim Hyong Jik sat staring at the door.

There was another silence in the room.

Now, placing her small wrinkled fist on Kim Hyong Jik's lap the grandmother lamented:

"We should have finished off all the island barbarians when they first tried to set foot on our soil, the way your grandfather burnt up the American ship that sailed up the Taedong-gang, then we would have no trouble now.... Now what should we do, my grandson, to drive out those scoundrels, those wild beasts?"

"Don't worry, Grandmother!" the grandson said soothingly, holding her small hand in his hands and pressing it. "We'll chase the Japs out and free our country whatever happens."

"How can we beat those heinous Japs?"

"However heinous, they must be beaten if all Koreans rise and fight to the death."

"How will all the Koreans rise?"

"They will. We'll see to that. And if we cannot do it in our lifetime, Jung Son here will take over, and if he fails, his son after him. If we go on fighting generation after generation, we will win back our country. And our family must be the first to make this resolve."

Looking admiringly at her grandson the grandmother nodded her approval. Then she looked round at the members of the family and said, "Mark his words, all of you! What he says is right. We must all remember his words."

All answered the implied question calmly in the affirmative. Kim Hyong Jik's youngest brother replied, "Yes!" in a ringing voice to evoke smiles from all.

They talked on until near daybreak, then Kang Ban Sok made a bed for her husband in the end-room and went out to the kitchen.

But he had only a short sleep, getting up at dawn as he always did to climb up Mangyong-bong Hill with his son. After exercises and a cold-water rub, they came back.

Breakfast over, he prepared to go out with a bundle of books.

"You should have a rest today," said his wife, looking concerned. "You've travelled a thousand *ri* and have had little sleep...."

"It's all right," Kim Hyong Jik replied. "At home I feel strong. I must report at the school; I am several days late for the beginning of term."

As usual, he strode along at a great pace towards the school.

Kang Ban Sok followed her husband with her eyes as he went out, exchanging cheerful greetings with the villagers and school children he met on his way.

From that day on he spent his after-school hours at the desk in the end-room. As the days went by more and more newspapers, magazines and books piled up on his desk.

He sat there reading page after page, and then sometimes he would pause abruptly, cup his chin in his hands and sat there sunk in thought. He sat up to the early hours almost every night.

He grew thinner and thinner, while his eyes became more serious and flashed with ardour.

Kang Ban Sok alone knew that something extraordinary, something great was hatching in his mind.

4

"Once again!"

The command rang through the playground.

There were two poles by a sand pit in a corner of the playground with a bar across them for high jump. A fragile-looking boy with his coat off stood in front of it in an awkward pose.

The boy hesitated, and glanced back at the middle of the ground whence the command had come. The other boys were sitting in two rows; they had already had their turn. In front of them stood Kim Hyong Jik in a sports suit. The boy stood hesitating at the crossbar looking imploringly at the teacher.

"Try once more!" the teacher said sternly. The boy turned his head to look the crossbar. He sighed faintly and then, turning round, stepped drooping towards the middle of the ground.

"At the double, march!" came the voice of command. The boy broke into a run. He went to the starting point and turned round towards the sand pit. His oval face and clear, intelligent eyes expressed his mixed feelings. His eyes, which had shown despair mixed with shame, now shone with determination, but the next moment they were filled with fear.

The whistle sounded. The boy winced and then, biting his lip, ran forward. At first he darted ahead raising the dust behind him, but as the sand pit rushed towards him, his speed dropped. When he got to the crossbar he stopped.

"And again!" Kim Hyong Jik gave the command from where he was standing. But the boy sat down limply at the spot. The other boys watched the teacher's face. The teacher fixed his stern eyes on the weak-spirited boy. Then he again commanded, "Stand up!" in a low stern voice. The boy got up reluctantly.

"Come here, Jun Sik!" the teacher called.

The boy plodded forward and stopped in front of the teacher, hanging his head. Watching the boy's slender neck and frail shoulders, Kim Hyong Jik felt sorry for him. He had already tried nine times. Now the teacher even thought

of dismissing him. But sympathy now could blight a promising future. He was the most weak-willed of the boys. Though he was bright and good at his studies, he lacked will power. He was a bookworm more a thinker than a doer.

Kim Hyong Jik turned round to face the boys who were sitting in line and called, "Yong Chol!"

"Yes, sir!" came a brisk reply, and the shortest boy squatting at the head of the line jumped to his feet. He was shorter by a head than the boy standing in front and looked his junior by two or three years. He had a round, sunburnt face.

"You take a jump," said the teacher, "and you, Jun Sik, watch him."

At the teacher's whistle Yong Chol darted ahead, his eyes sparkling with fight. He ran like the wind, and when he reached the crossbar which was nearly up to his chin he jumped without hesitation. He flew over the bar and fell on the sand pit. The next instant Yong Chol leaped to his feet and, turning towards the teacher, stood to attention.

The teacher looked at Jun Sik and asked, "See?"

"Yes, sir. But I'm not fit for gymnastics...." Jun Sik muttered under his breath.

"Then do you think Yong Chol did it because he is fit?"

Jun Sik was stuck for an answer. Until the last gymnastics hour, Yong Chol had cut as miserable a figure as he did now. But today Yong Chol had cleared it every time he tried. It was like a miracle.

"He had a workout by himself for hours last night," said the teacher. "Now ask yourself why you, you of all boys, can't jump over the crossbar. Even a much shorter, younger boy can manage it...."

Jun Sik dropped his head low.

"Aren't you ashamed or vexed with yourself, Jun Sik? Pull yourself together! You're not unfit. What you lack is fighting spirit and courage. You lack the spirit and the will power to think to yourself: What others do I can do, and I'm going to do it. I'll do it if it kills me; nothing can frighten or frustrate me if I once decide to really put my back into it."

"Sir!" Jun Sik cried out, raising his head resolutely. There was bitterness in his glinting eyes.

"Make up your mind to have another try. Don't worry if you fail, don't mind if you hit yourself against the bar, just try to hurl yourself over it against all odds. Don't think

of it as a crossbar but as an enemy that you must overcome."

"I'll try, sir!" Jun Sik cried, his face red. He clenched his fists and stood at the starting point. He glared at the sand pit, determined. At the whistle the boy shot forward. Just before the crossbar he jumped. But his thigh hit the bar and he fell flat on the sand. The crossbar broke with a snap. Kim Hyong Jik ran to the boy who was covered with sand, and helped him to his feet.

"Are you hurt?" the teacher asked, concerned.

"No, sir. Please let me try again. I think I'll make it this time."

Jun Sik's eyes sparkled. The teacher smiled, he could not suppress his delight.

"Go ahead," he said, putting his hand gently on the boy's shoulder, "I'll put up a new crossbar. This time you'll succeed, I'm sure you will." Warm affection showed on his face. With redoubled courage Jun Sik took another jump. He flew over, his trouser leg barely touching the bar.

All his classmates got up and cheered. They seemed even more delighted than the boy himself. Brushing the sand off Jun Sik, Kim Hyong Jik said, "Well done! From now on you must go at everything with the same spirit. If you believe in your own strength and have a strong will, you'll find that nothing is beyond your power."

Jun Sik's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

That day, on his way home after school Kim Hyong Jik reflected on the day's occurrences at school, and he was satisfied with more than one thing: First, the weak-willed Jun Sik's success in jumping; then the grief for their lost country that was growing in the boys' hearts; and their growing hatred for the Japs. Some things that cannot be bartered. When he told them of the horrors he had seen in north Chientao, the pupils beat their chests with clenched fists, their eyes blazing with fury.

Kim Hyong Jik walked down the road thinking that at the next singing class he would teach them the song *Move Ahead.* When he was some way from the school, he met his younger brother, Hyong Gwon, looking rather dejected.

Asked where he was going he answered in a trembling voice, "Brother, the Japs have driven a 'Government-General's' stake into Uncle Kang Gi Dong's field."

"What?" Kim Hyong Jik exclaimed, taking a step forward

in spite of himself.

"The Japs claim it's their land. It has become the 'Government-General's' land, they say. Uncle heard it and rushed out with a manure fork to have an accounting with the Japs."

"Um!" Kim Hyong Jik's eyes emitted fire. He hurried off towards the Sunhwa-gang River.

For the last few days Mangyongdae and the surrounding area had seen Japs in black uniforms with gold braid on their sleeves strutting about like jackdaws, driving in "Government-General's" stakes. The fields and hills echoed with the sounds of stakes being hammered into the ground, and where there were the sounds of hammers there were cries and wails of peasants who were robbed of land which was as dear to them as their own flesh. The many Japanese gendarmes and police round the stakes bristled with bayonets.

The night before the peasant Kang Gi Dong had come to see Kim Hyong Jik. He had looked deadly pale. Towards sunset, he said, the wicked squire Li who was now acting for the landlords declared that all the land on the banks of the Sunhwa-gang including Kang's patch of 400 *pyong* was now "Government-General's" land. Every handful of those 400 *pyong* of land was permeated with the sweat and blood of Kang Gi Dong and his family. All his life he had dreamed of ploughing and sowing his own patch of land, however small, and eight years earlier he had taken great pains to cultivate this ownerless piece of wasteland on the river bank. He worked his fingers to the bone digging up tangled reeds and tree roots, and bent his back in carrying manure out to fertilize the soil. He had taken out and carried away enough stones to build a mountain and carried manure enough on his back to cover the whole valley. Now it was one of the best plots in Nam-ri.

"You bastards, just try and drive your stake into my field. You'll find yourselves keeping me company to the nether world," Kang Gi Dong had moaned with bloodshot eyes, clenching his fists and grinding his teeth.

Kim Hyong Jik cut across the hillock thick with pine trees and walked down to the bank of the Sunhwa-gang. He came to a halt at the edge of Kang Gi Dong's field. There was the newly planed white post on the ridge, clearly inscribed in black ink: "Bureau of Land Survey, Government-General of Korea". There were innumerable footprints around the stake,

and even marks of blood. The blood had been shed by Kang Gi Dong who had offered resistance with his fork when the stake was being driven in.

Kim Hyong Jik trembled in fury as he raised his eyes and stared across the fields. The black-clad Japs moved about surveying the fields at the foot of the hill beyond the mound. Shouting and yelling, they moved the levelling poles hither and thither. Some measured the ground with steel tapes that glittered in the sun and others drove in new stakes with hammers. Seven or eight gendarme's assistants and policemen hung about at the edges of the fields with rifles on their shoulders, bayonets flashing in the sun.

Presently Kim Hyong Jik who had been staring at the Japanese went straight to Kang Gi Dong's.

The old man was lying in bed, his injured head bound with a kerchief. He had been hit by a Jap with a levelling pole. The kerchief was soaked with blood. All his family and several young villagers sat anxiously watching him. They said the old man had been writhing, mortified at the wrong he had suffered. Finally he had calmed down and taken to his bed.

Kim Hyong Jik sat at his bedside and took his lean forearm in his hands. From the man's sharp, jerky pulse he could feel his excited heart still throbbing with wrath. He felt a lump in his throat.

"Uncle!" he said calmly.

The old man opened his eyes slowly and feebly. As he recognized the visitor, the tears gathered in his eyes. Swallowing his agony, he closed his eyes again. The tears coursed down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Sir!" he mumbled, pressing Kim Hyong Jik's hand. "A fool that I am, allowing myself to live and suffer this insult, without settling scores with the enemy...."

Kim Hyong Jik was unable to find words to console him. Unless the lost land was reclaimed for him, there could be no consolation.

"Calm yourself," he said soothingly. "Why not live? You must have treatment without delay."

The old man opened his eyes again and said, drawing Kim Hyong Jik's hand towards himself:

"What use is it for an idiot to live, sir? What good is it for a man to live after he's meekly let himself be robbed of his land by gangsters in broad daylight and that land his

family's only living? Even an idiot would have collared the enemy and fought it out. Don't you think so? Oh, woe is me!"

As he spoke, the tears trickled down his pale emaciated face.

Kim Hyong Jik felt tears coming up behind his own eyes.

"Calm yourself," he said. "You aren't the only person who is suffering, are you? Our whole country, all our land has been taken by Jap robbers. The day we send the enemy packing out of here and take back our country, your field will also be recovered. You must get treatment quickly, and live to see that day."

"Ugh! But when do you say that day will come?"

"Uncle, that day will come. It will."

Having soothed the old man, Kim Hyong Jik turned round and said to the young people: "There is no time to lose. Go get a stretcher and take him to hospital in Bbaengdae Street. You must hurry."

Now the youths started up wide-eyed.

"Leave me alone," cried out the old man, "I won't be good for anything even if I do live...."

Kim Hyong Jik persuaded the old man to lie on the stretcher. He wrote a message addressed to Doctor O in Bbaengdae Street, and handing it to the youths, said: "You must run. Take turns to carry the stretcher. Start out at once."

Standing on the mound on the bank of the Sunhwa-gang, he gazed after the youths hurrying away with the stretcher for a long time.

From across the river came the echoes of hammers driving stakes into the ground.

"Go ahead, drive them in deep!" Kim Hyong Jik shouted in his heart, clenching his fists. "We'll see how many years those stakes of yours will stay here."

That night, too, the window of Kim Hyong Jik's room remained bright till late.

He was reading a book on the downfall of Korea by a celebrated historian. He looked up and laid the book face down on his desk. A thin wisp of smoke rose from the oil lamp. As he sat locked in thought, the dancing light was reflected in his eyes.

On the right wall hung a plain scroll on which two charac-

ters were inscribed by dashing brush strokes 志遠 (Aim High). And beside it a sheet of paper with *Cho Son* (Korea) written on it, the first two characters Kim Hyong Jik had taught the future Marshal. He had taught his son to write his country's name before his own. With an unusually warm heart he watched his son's calligraphy.

In the book he had just been reading the historian cried out the phrases "lost country" and "5,000 years of history of a bleeding country which has been chopped to pieces". This was the agonizing reality, which seemed to groan at every mark of the two characters written by the future Marshal.

Suddenly there came to his ears "Bang, bang, bang..." —the hammering sound which seemed to shake his heart and body to the core. It might be an illusion. But the sound was distinct. Another stake was being driven into the ground with the earthbound sound of hammering "Bang, bang, bang...", accompanied by the yelling of the "land surveyors" who rushed about the fields of Nam-ri like so many jackdaws with their gleaming steel tapes.

He seemed to see the fields and valleys of Nam-ri in his mind's eye, indeed, the fields and mountains and river banks of the whole country where forests of stakes were being driven in, and hear the sounds of ten, twenty, a hundred, ten million hammers beating on his ears.

He felt painfully oppressed. He tightened the fists on his desk so hard that the veins stood out on the back of his hands and his heart beat violently against his ribs.

It was nearly six years since the Japanese had robbed them of their country. The invader, a beast more ferocious, cruel, vicious than all other beasts, had only just cut its teeth. Having seized the whole, the Jap was now going to tear it apart piece by piece and chew it up in its great maws.

"Koreans must obey Japanese laws or die," snarled the beast.

What a diabolical brute it is to make such a declaration! Even the officials, school teachers and survey engineers, to say nothing of the gendarmes and policemen, wear swords and strut across our land. This is the land the utterance of whose very name, Korea, can cost you your life! The Japs have framed a "Land Survey Act", a "Mining Act", a "Corporation Law", an "Education Law", etc. They use these diverse words to cut up everything—mountains and streams, plants and trees—to

make a mangled mess to suit their taste.

Again there came the hideous sound of stakes being hammered into the ground and the pale old man's cry: "What use is it for an idiot to live, sir?"

Then, in his mind's eyes he saw again the red clouds reflecting the raging flames. Hundreds of miles of blood and flames across Chientao, and the voice of the little girl crying anxiously for her parents beside the charred treestump.

Kim Hyong Jik was pained by all these visions and the historian's desperate cry, "Alas, the pity of it, the Korean nation chopped into bloody pieces. Is there no way to carry on 5,000 years of history?..." He could not stand it any longer. The room felt stuffy, he was choking. He opened the door and went out into the yard.

The night was quiet, a half moon shone in a serene dark blue sky. The moon shed its tender light over the pine trees, tall pine forest on Mangyong-bong Hill, over the valley of Nam-ri at its foot and over the peak of Mt. Ryongak-san behind that towered in the night sky. There was a chilly breeze. The leafless branches of the ash tree in the yard were swaying.

He felt a little better outside. He walked slowly wherever his legs carried him. A cold wind moaned over the top of a mound on the Sunhwa-gang when he got there, gently blowing up the hair behind his ears. In front of him the Taedong-gang flowed quietly. The pale moonlight glimmered in the rolling waters. Beyond, the vast Chunghwa plain stretched into the hazy distance. The river flowed calmly in the blue moonlight, as the grey strip of water wound along its course from Pyongyang. In front of Mangyong-bong Hill, which rose up like an island, the waters swept round a great bend to join the Sunhwa-gang. Now the waters flowed as wide as a sea. The scenery was as exquisitely lovely as in a dream, magnificently inspiring.

He could hardly believe that this beautiful land should be under Japanese bayonets. The rolling of the waves and the rustle of the breeze in the pine grove of Mangyong-bong Hill seemed to be pulsing of a beating heart, the breath of lungs alive and working in the depths of this nation's soil. He took a few steps towards the Taedong-gang. Looking down on the wide expanse of the water, his eyes sparkled.

"No, historian!" he said to himself. "You're mistaken. Our lineage is not broken. Our nation's ancestral line is alive in the hearts of our millions, in their flesh and bones. Stop

your lamentation! We'll cut our way through to liberation, to resurrection, whatever the cost. We'll revive our brilliant 5,000 years of history by our own efforts and make its line run steadily ahead without stagnation, like this river. Strike out these lines of despair and wailing!"

Three years ago Kim Hyong Jik quitted the Sungsil School and, with a great ambition to dedicate all his life to the cause of national liberation, became a teacher at the Sunhwa School. Since then he had devoted all his energy and wisdom to the work of rallying comrades and educating and awakening the masses. As a result, he had been able to have a considerable number of comrades not only in and around Pyongyang but also in many places at home and even abroad.

However, for the last few months he had been keenly feeling that it was high time to open up a new phase for the cause of national liberation. This was a most urgent question in the light of the intensified Japanese colonial rule, the present independence movement on the constant decline under the pressure of this rule and of the demands of the revolutionary movement built up by himself. He had been working hard to find ways and means for it. He had inspected many places in North and South Pyongan Provinces and then the distant border areas along the Amnok-gang and even Chientao beyond. This was part of his hard endeavour to find the flawless ways and means by acquainting himself with the internal and external situation.

He looked over at the river, the fields, the grove of trees, the village which were bathed in the blue moonlight, and up at the murky sky, and he felt keenly the great mission entrusted to him and to his generation by history and by twenty million Koreans. He solemnly pledged that he would fulfil the mission even though it cost his life.

The early spring night ran its course quickly. Cock crows from the village told of the new day; the curtain of night was rising.

The early morning air was raw.

He descended from the mound on the Sunhwa-gang.

Back home, he slipped on his *turumagi* and emerged from the room again. As he was just going out of the twig gate, he heard the door open. Coming out to prepare the breakfast, Kang Ban Sok followed him and said anxiously: "You didn't sleep last night; you must at least have breakfast before you

go."

"Don't worry," he smiled tenderly. "I have many things to do in the town today, so I must start out early. I'll have breakfast at a tavern on Bbaengdae Street. And on my way I'll look in and see how Uncle Kang Gi Dong is doing."

"All right, but wait a minute. You must have your scarf around your neck, it's cold."

Kang Ban Sok hurried inside and came out again with a scarf. Her husband accepted it and wound it round his neck, warmed by his wife's deep affection. But he simply smiled and said, "I'll be back tonight, though maybe a little late."

He turned and strode away towards the Mangyongdae pass.

He had to see his comrades in the town, send messages to those in the provinces, and then, taking advantage of the occasion, meet Song Se Ho, one of the leaders of the overseas independence movement, who was staying with Mr. O at present and wanted to meet him.

He walked quickly towards the lightening grey of the dawn over Pyongyang.

5

"As the saying goes, the country is ruined, and yet the mountains and rivers are the same. It is heartrending...." Song Se Ho muttered, half to himself, looking from the hillock of Mansudae across Kyongsang-gol Dingle, Moran-bong Hill and the Taedong-gang. Mr. O, a man of small stature in Korean dress, standing behind, nodded gently looking out at the Taedong-gang with a serious expression. Both men were silent for a while.

"Chong Am," called Mr. O, deeply moved, "it is six years since you went abroad, isn't it?" Chong Am was Song Se Ho's other name.

Song Se Ho nodded and turned his slender body towards Mr. O. He wore a pinstriped coat and a black bow on the collar of his well-starched shirt. His round dignified face was rosy, and he had a fine moustache.

"Yes, it is," he answered with feeling. "And not a day

has passed in these sad years without my seeing the mountains and rivers of our country in my mind's eye. Ah!"

"Quite understandable! But looking at our rivers and mountains, I have often thought of leaving this country as you did. Look at the streets. Now this country has changed hands, hasn't it?" Mr. O deplored, glancing at the streets of Pyongyang proper lined with two and three storey brick houses and noisy with hooting motorcars.

"No, you're mistaken," Song Se Ho said with a shake of his head, fingering his moustache. "Do you think it's easy to be humiliated as a ruined people in a foreign land? Even if you're trampled underfoot, I would say it's better to suffer in your own country."

"Well, you may be right.... But as the situation is getting so bad, I'm at a loss what to do.... When I meet and have a heart-to-heart talk with patriots at home, I find them all plunged in an abyss of despair, sighing away their days. They believe that the glory of this country can never be retrieved by the Koreans' own efforts."

"Ha, ha, ha. There you go again, Mr. O, harping on the same thing. I thought I had explained all that last night, the aspirations of those of us who are engaged in the independence movement abroad...." Song Se Ho said, laughing out loudly. But somehow his laugh sounded hollow and lacked spirit. Mr. O glanced at him, a trifle perplexed.

"Chong Am," he said hastily as if he had remembered something, "you aren't getting me right. I just wanted to tell you the thought I had had before I was acquainted with your plan last night. Of course, I think it's possible to accomplish our great cause of national liberation if we get support from such mighty great powers. That's why I'm out in the street with you now; I've cooped myself up indoors so long, you see. Ha, ha, ha...."

Planting his walking-stick so firmly that its tip drove into the ground, Song Se Ho said confidently:

"Mr. O, I'm sure our cause will win. When all of those engaged in the independence movement at home and abroad understand and approve our plan, and when the earnest petition of twenty million Koreans gets the sympathy and support of all the great powers, the Japanese savage, however vicious, will have no choice but to get out."

"How splendid that would be!"

"Ha, ha, ha...," Song Se Ho laughed, looking sympathetically at Mr. O's narrow face on which a look of doubt still lingered. "Mr. O, just like our landscape your disposition has remained unchanged."

"No, not that I'm dubious about...," mumbled Mr. O, as if to excuse himself.

The two men had been renowned as active in western Korea in the last years of the Li dynasty; they were especially well-known as pioneers of the enlightenment movement. They had worked together in the forefront of the patriotic enlightenment movement, organizing learned institutions, setting up schools and publishing magazines. Then, when the Japanese swallowed up Korea through the 1910 "Annexation Treaty", Song Se Ho took refuge abroad, and Mr. O locked himself up in his high-walled house at the foot of Mansudae and lived secluded from the world, seldom coming out.

"Chong Am!" Mr. O broke the silence which brooded over the two. As Song Se Ho turned his head towards him, Mr. O was gazing down over Kyongsang-gol Dingle, full of emotion, and said softly: "Do you remember the event that took place in the grounds of the army barracks in Kyongsang-gol Dingle at that time?"

"In the barrack grounds?" Song Se Ho muttered, half to himself, staring at his friend.

Mr. O reminded him by saying, "A grand athletic meet of the youth and students from western Korea was held there and...." Only then did Song remember and he replied:

"Ah, yes. Of course I remember. Now let me see. I think it was after the signing of the 'Chongmi Seven-point Treaty'. So it was eleven years ago, I reckon. But I was more impressed by the spirited speaking contest of the youth and students than the athletic meet."

Song Se Ho too looked towards Kyongsang-gol Dingle, now overgrown with weeds, where once had been the army barrack grounds. He appeared to be profoundly moved.

"Do you remember the student who made a speech that day, the one who represented Sunhwa School in Mangyongdae?" Mr. O asked.

"Sunhwa School?"

Chong Am narrowed his eyes in an effort to remember. It was more a political campaign to save the nation from

Japan than an athletic meet. Hundreds of champions and representatives of youth associations assembled from many counties in western Korea, and tens of thousands of Pyongyangites turned out to see it. Before the sports meeting opened, there had been a speaking contest among young orators from different schools. They vied with each other in their fiery speeches condemning the treacherous "Ulsa Treaty".

"The third one? Wasn't he the youngest speaker that day? I mean the handsome youngster with unusually bright eyes."

"Oh, yes, I remember now." Chong Am said, glancing round at Mr. O. "You mean the student who mercilessly exposed the outrageous provisions of the 'Chongmi Seven-point Treaty', don't you?"

"Yes, the student who said that the whole nation must rise up and deliver the country from this crisis, that we can't even float a small skiff in the gutter, but on the ocean we can float a huge man-of-war. How, then, did the ocean come into being? Small streams rise in the ravines and, flowing through plains, join into large rivers, and the rivers flow together to form a vast ocean."

"I know," said Song Se Ho thrusting his walkingstick into the ground. "That student was real orator. I remember him saying: Although the strength of individuals counts for little, the united force of the twenty million Koreans will be enough to cope with anything. Let us unite to become a great ocean, to crush the Japanese robbers and win back our independence.... His speech got thunderous applause, didn't it?"

Mr. O nodded with a smile, and asked: "And do you remember who that student was?"

"Well no... I forgot his name."

"He is the Mr. Kim Hyong Jik whom you want to meet."

"Oh, is that so?" Song Se Ho was much surprised and excited. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Looking down at the grounds of the ruined barracks, I was suddenly reminded of the old days and...."

Song Se Ho seemed to be deeply touched as he looked at the barrack grounds again.

"Well," he opened his mouth, "nearly ten years have passed since then, so he should be doing able work for the independence movement now. His speech then was enough to convince me of his outstanding quality. That's why the young man is famous now as a man of extraordinary calibre. I'm very

keen to meet him. But, Mr. O, are you sure he'll come?"

"He'll come. He said he would."

"I will do my best to persuade Mr. Kim Hyong Jik to leave with me. If he joins us abroad in negotiating with the great powers and in a major propaganda campaign, we'll achieve big things."

Song Se Ho pulled his watch out of his pocket—it was attached to his yellowish woolen waistcoat by a silver chain —and said to Mr. O: "Well now, Mr. O, let's go on down. It's getting near the hour."

"All right, let's."

The two went down Mansudae Hill. Back in Mr. O's outhouse room where Song Se Ho was staying, they had just lit up cigarettes when they heard someone announcing himself at the front gate. There were hurried footsteps and then Mr. O's son's voice apprised his father of Kim Hyong Jik's arrival.

The two men got up and hurried out. A plainly dressed youth walked into the courtyard. He wore a black cotton *turumagi* and a felt hat.

"How are you, sir?" Kim Hyong Jik greeted Mr. O, with a slight bow.

"Thank you, and you, Mr. Kim? We've been waiting for you," Mr. O walked quickly across the courtyard and saluted him in a flurry. Song Se Ho was behind him.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Kim Hyong Jik," Mr. O said. "Let me introduce you. Song Se Ho, returned from abroad where he was working for the independence movement; he's only been home a few days."

"Oh, how do you do? Your name is familiar to me of course," Kim Hyong Jik spoke first.

"I am Song Se Ho. I've heard a lot about you and have been anxious to meet you. I'm sorry to have made you come all the way here."

"Don't mention it."

"Do come in," Mr. O invited.

The three walked across the shiny floor of the hall and entered the outhouse room. It was not very big, but it was comfortable with a simple elegance. A reproduction of O Won's *Wild Geese* and a long scroll on which a Chinese poem was inscribed with dynamic strokes by the brush of Chu Sa hung on the white-papered walls, and an inkstone case and an exquisite stationery chest stood near the glazed sliding

door. The room was Mr. O's bed-room and study.

Since the annexation in 1910 Mr. O had led a melancholy life in this room in his high-walled house, reading books, old and modern, Occidental and Oriental. On rare occasions he went out to Samsong Middle School of which he was principal. It was warm in the room; the floor was covered with a clean mat with three silk cushions on it. They sat down.

Mr. O, who had been studying his guests' faces, was the first to speak out.

"Mr. Song devoted himself to the patriotic enlightenment movement in western Korea in the last years of the Li dynasty. He left Korea in the autumn of the year our country was annexed. At present he is working abroad for our country's independence. He came home to explain the designs of the independence movement overseas to those working in the independence movement at home, that the two might coordinate their action. Here in Pyongyang he has been especially keen to meet you. Of course, he should have called on you first, but police surveillance has increased these days, so it is dangerous to go out on a country road which is open to everybody's eye. That's why we asked you to come and meet him here. Please understand this."

Mr. O's explanation was so polite that Kim Hyong Jik felt a little embarrassed by it. Then Song Se Ho spoke.

"I have heard a great deal about you from Mr. O. While engaged in educational work, he said, you have been mustering comrades in various places and energetically forwarding the independence movement. On my way home this time I travelled through the area along the Amnok-gang River, and I heard from independence workers there that you made a round of the Chientao area some time earlier and had exchanged views with them. Your energetic activities have been a source of great inspiration to us in the independence movement overseas."

Though this was their first meeting, Song Se Ho found Kim Hyong Jik trustworthy, and felt a strong desire to join hands with him now while he was at home.

"No, you put it too strongly. I have done nothing worthwhile as yet."

"Ah, you're too modest. At any rate, I regard this meeting with you as a great pleasure and the biggest gain of my journey home this time. I can't restrain my desire to have

a frank talk with you as with a dear friend after a long absence."

"Thank you. I am also anxious to know your views."

Kim Hyong Jik carefully sized up Song Se Ho, weighing his refined words and surveying his elegant behaviour. He noticed something hollow in this gentleman though he seemed plain and unaffected.

At this moment the door opened quietly and a middle-aged woman in a graceful dress came in, carrying a tray with plates of *yakkwa* (cakes made from wheat-flour, oil and honey—*Tr.*), teacups and a teapot.

She put the tray down in the middle of the room, and then said hesitantly, "You must forgive me, but we have not very much to treat our guests..." and, quietly opening the door, withdrew.

Song Se Ho raised the cup placed before him and took a couple of sips of the steaming hot tea. Putting it down, he began to speak with a serious air, looking now at Kim Hyong Jik, now at Mr. O.

"It is nearly a month since I got off the paddle steamer and set foot in my country. During that time I have travelled far and wide—along the Amnok-gang to the north, the Samnam region and Kyonggi, Kangwon and Hwanghae Provinces to the south, to meet the people in the independence movement and men of influence at home. Six years is a short time, but it can seem very long. For in this period our beautiful Korea has been completely overrun by Japs; the towns and villages echo to the clattering of their wooden clogs and the rattle of their gendarmes and police. On the other hand, the number of people aspiring to national independence has shrunk and the independence movement, once as vigorous as an active volcano, is now ebbing away under the Japanese savages' cruel repression. It has been heartrending to see."

Kim Hyong Jik nodded slightly to show his agreement. Song Se Ho went on to say:

"As I see it, and as Mr. O deplored last night, many of the independence workers are at a complete loss how to steer the movement in the future under the ever-increasing Japanese repression. Some have deserted saying that now the independence movement is little more than a dream. I find this very sad."

"You are right," Kim Hyong Jik spoke for the first time.

Encouraged, Song Se Ho went on:

"What, then, is at this juncture the most urgent task for us men with great aspiration? I believe that our task is to show the dispirited a clear-cut road to national resurrection."

Song Se Ho looked at Mr. O and Kim Hyong Jik in turn as if to seek their approval.

"Please carry on," said Kim Hyong Jik. At this the speaker resumed with confidence:

"It seems to me that first we must discard the hidebound viewpoint to which our predecessors were shackled. I mean that first of all, we must renounce the abstract, symbolical feudal royalism, the idea that the highest duty is to the sovereign. In my opinion the independence workers in a civilized age should base their attitude and viewpoint on intelligence, reason, and practicability. Hence I believe that we must find a realistic road to national liberation and revival."

Like an orator speaking from a rostrum, he spoke in a declamatory tone with passion and gesticulation.

"...Let me review the independence movement of the last years. First, the Righteous Volunteers were an expression of a lofty ideal—to defeat the enemy with arms, staking their lives. But it did not prove practical. To fight the formidable Japanese invasion forces with a handful of flintlocks is sheer recklessness. And what about the patriotic enlightenment movement? It is true that inspiring patriotism in the people and awakening them to modern civilization in an underdeveloped country is a useful undertaking to open their eyes. However, it must be admitted that this movement, too, is ineffective in achieving national resurrection and independence."

Song Se Ho then went into a lengthy explanation that neither the Righteous Volunteers nor the patriotic political and cultural enlightenment movement were, in practice, very effective arms of an independence movement.

Though slightly bored by this long introduction Kim Hyong Jik listened patiently.

"So, having negated all the current movements, the question is, what next? What is your strategy to achieve the great cause of independence, and wherein lies your power to do so? These questions will be asked," and as he asked his rhetorical

questions Song Se Ho glanced at the others.

"Go ahead!" urged Mr. O, carried away once more by Chong Am's passionate speech although he had spent nearly all the previous night listening to the same speech. And after pausing, for effect, the speaker continued:

"From what I have said I would like to draw two conclusions. The first is that the movement lacks the means to restore our country's independence; and the second that we must therefore widen our intellectual horizons and seek new means, find a decisive force for the independence movement in a different way."

"What do you mean by a different way?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, looking at Song Se Ho.

"Oh, yes," Song Se Ho smiled and went on. "I think we must turn our eyes outward from the narrow bounds of the Korean peninsula towards the big world outside. For within these bounds we can find neither strategy nor power to push the Japanese out to retrieve our national rights. But once we look beyond, study the world outside, we can find the means and forces with which to accomplish our great cause."

He raised and spread his arms as if to show the whole world before the two men's eyes.

"What is Japan's international position? Japan is not really the established great power people tend to believe her to be; among great powers she is only a weak junior partner.

"Certainly she has made enormous profits and increased her power during the World War, but she is still lagging way behind the Western powers. Now then, Mr. Kim, what do you think would happen were Korea's independence movement to gain active support from the Western powers? If they side with us and take concerted action to put pressure on Japan, claiming Korea's right to self-government and independence, I think Japan would be unable to hold on. The only question here is whether we are able to secure the great powers' support and sympathy...," Song Se Ho harangued in answer to his own questions. His now cold teacup in his hand, Mr. O sat gazing at Song; he did not care to drink the tea.

While speaking, Song Se Ho kept glancing at Kim Hyong Jik, and the latter's silence irritated him.

Song Se Ho now zealously underlined his contacts abroad with many Western politicians, the great interest and sympathy they had shown for the Korean independence movement, and

that many of them had hinted that after the present war they would give more support and maybe actually aid the movement.

Concluding his speech, Song picked up his cup and took a sip of tea. Then, pulling a snow-white handkerchief out of his pocket, he wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"So may I take it that your idea is to achieve Korean independence with the aid of the Western powers?" Kim Hyong Jik inquired with a serious look at Song Se Ho.

"Yes, Mr. Kim. That is the only possible way for the Korean independence movement. There is no other. Of course, you are engaged in a useful work now, but the prospects are very unclear. Our people abroad are anxiously waiting for people like yourself. I was determined to take this opportunity to meet you at all costs, so I changed my itinerary and am now staying here in Pyongyang." said Song Se Ho, quite convinced that Kim Hyong Jik would accept.

"Mr. Kim," Mr. O called, looking imploringly at Kim Hyong Jik. "An arena of activity has been opened up before you now. Chong Am has stayed here for three days to join hands with you."

Song Se Ho was putting a cigarette into a thick amber cigarette holder. But Kim Hyong Jik smiled silently, looking from one to the other. Then, he said politely:

"I have enjoyed hearing your view and earnest advice. But before I give an answer I would like to set forth my views on your plan for the restoration of the country's independence."

"Your views?" Song was slightly taken aback and looked hard at Kim Hyong Jik. He had been expecting immediate wholehearted approval. But Kim Hyong Jik had been quite calm. And now he wanted to express his own views. This was surprising. All the more so, because so many political figures, speakers and patriots at home and abroad had been moved and persuaded by Song Se Ho's arguments, which he had considered completely flawless. "Please go ahead," said Song. After collecting his thoughts for a moment, Kim Hyong Jik began calmly:

"Basically I agree to your premise that the independence movement is at present so hard pressed that it cannot move any farther and that today Korean independence workers must broaden their horizons, must take a bird's-eye view of the

internal and external situation and, on this basis, work out a new policy for their movement."

"Ah, so you agree?" Song Se Ho put in, his face lighting up with joy, and finally, looking rather relieved.

"But I disagree to some aspects of your analysis of the internal and external situation and the present conditions of the independence movement and your conclusions drawn from it, and also with the policy that you propose," Kim Hyong Jik said firmly, without hesitation.

"Disagree?" echoed back Song, his face tensing. The hand holding the amber cigarette holder trembled and stopped half way to his lips. Mr. O was perplexed and stared at Kim Hyong Jik. But Song Se Ho immediately assumed a generous attitude and said, "Please go on. It's very useful to talk things over."

For a few minutes, Kim Hyong Jik was silent. He had expected much from Song Se Ho. But when all the latter's talk boiled down to an argument for dependence on foreign powers, he was bitterly disappointed. He was not much inclined to discuss the real problem of the country's liberation with such people. It was because of flunkeyism that after 5,000 years the Korean people's history was stained with disgrace and that in the end Korea was ruined.

But Kim Hyong Jik knew that Song Se Ho had at one time dedicated himself to the patriotic enlightenment movement and, that bogged down as he was in the idea of depending on foreign forces, pinning hopes on the Western powers, he was, even now, endeavouring to deliver the country from calamity. So he decided that he should use this opportunity to convince him that his view was wrong. So calmly he went on:

"First I would like to express my views on your analysis of the international situation. I can understand your intention of finding conflicts between Japan and the Western powers. But I disagree with your point of view, the basis of your analysis and consequently with your conclusions. For three years the war has turned the whole world into a sea of conflagration. And while the European powers are locked in battle with each other in this bloody war, Japan has been sitting in her corner of the East, fishing in these troubled waters to amass a fortune. Now she is posing as the strong man of Asia. Some people say that Japan has now become a 'great power' whose authority cannot be challenged either in Asia or the world,

and that therefore the movement to regain Korea's national independence is virtually hopeless. But this is a short-sighted view—missing the forest for the trees. We need to study and analyse the latest developments of the international situation with care."

He summed up and analysed the furious scramble for colonies and for supremacy in which the great powers had been engrossed, especially in the 19th and the early 20th century, and explained in detail how the waves of their struggle for supremacy were now spreading gradually to the East, to Asia.

He declared that the current global war of genocide was no more than a fight between several dirty dogs, the culmination of the European powers' rivalry for supremacy, and he predicted the outcome of the war. In all probability, he said, the war would end in the defeat of Imperial Germany, an isolated power, and its allies, that Russia, Great Britain, France and Japan would dominate the world as great powers; and that they would be joined by the United States, which had been doing big business and had come into riches overnight by sitting on the fence and taking advantage of the war.

Then what would the relationship be among the victors? Would they get on well with each other? No, of course not. The great powers would continue their dogfight for supremacy. He went on to say:

"...Their next great fight for supremacy will be especially fierce in Asia which still remains a vacuum on the earth and where the balance of forces has changed through the World War, this is as clear as day. To be more exact, we can easily foresee a big struggle for mastery over Asia between a newly powerful Japan and the Western powers whom she has started elbowing out. That should be a golden opportunity for the Korean independence movement."

When Kim Hyong Jik said this, Song Se Ho suddenly moved forward on his knees, addressing him: "Mr. Kim!" Kim Hyong Jik glanced at him with a puzzled look. In great excitement Song Se Ho said:

"Your argument is in complete agreement with my theory. I did not analyse the situation in such a detail as you have done; I expounded my conclusion first. I also mean we should avail ourselves of that golden opportunity. If we can take advantage of this struggle for supremacy and secure the great

powers' sympathy, support and assistance, if we take their side, we will be able to restore our national independence, will we not?" Song Se Ho tried to fit Kim Hyong Jik's thoroughgoing analysis of the international situation into his own argument for depending on foreign forces; he tried to draw water into his own mill. Now it seemed to Song that his own argument was still more solidly put, on a firmer scientific and realistic basis.

But Kim Hyong Jik sat smiling wryly. Mr. O looked at the two men by turn, he seemed to have been confused by their argument.

"Mr. Song, I do not see the golden opportunity the way you see it," Kim Hyong Jik said point-blank.

"What do you mean?" asked Song, bewildered, looking into Kim's bright serene eyes.

"I draw a rather different conclusion from the analysis. It is an impossibility, an idle dream that if we take advantage of this struggle for supremacy to get help from Western powers against Japan we will restore our national rights. Even if by some chance the Japanese forces were driven out of Korea with the help of such powers, for us the end-result would be no different: the bonds of serfdom would remain the same—under new masters."

"No, Mr. Kim! I'm afraid you haven't fully grasped what I say. Look here. I said we must rely on the Western forces and it means...." The impatient Song edged up towards Kim Hyong Jik, waving his hand which held the smoking cigarette holder.

"Chong Am," Mr. O soothed him gently, "let's hear him out."

Kim Hyong Jik remained calm and continued:

"Why do I draw such a conclusion? As you said, we should observe the drift of the international situation with reason and intelligence. In the first place, we should correctly analyse the constant vicissitudes of the great powers from the last century to this 20th century."

With this introduction he then made a brief review of the bloody battles of the last decades among Eastern and Western powers who kept changing sides. He went on:

"Now the question arises; what are their objectives, on what laws and ideas are the great powers' incessant struggles based? Are they really concerned with protecting small and weak nations, prompted by a sense of justice, the desire to

liberate the enslaved peoples? Hardly. As history testifies, they are aimed at conquering the world, at winning more colonies, invading other countries and gaining greater profits. They are rapacious fights among a pack of hungry wolves biting and tearing at one another; they don't hesitate to drown the whole earth in blood."

Kim Hyong Jik spoke in a soft voice, but the edge of his argument was as sharp as a sword. Mr. O was attentive, looking at him almost with reverence.

"Yes, that must be true, I should say," Song said, trying hard to hide his confusion. "But the Western powers are advanced civilized nations, they are gentlemen; they are quite different from the Japanese who are the uncivilized aborigines of an island country. Besides, I believe we would be able to attain our ends by dexterous diplomacy and negotiation."

"Do you say they are advanced, civilized nations, nations of gentlemen?" Kim Hyong Jik asked back, his eyes glinting fiercely. "Who do you mean by that? The United States? Great Britain or France? You know better than anyone else that the ruling circles of the United States, Great Britain and France have been indulging in rivalry for half a century to seize our country, sending warships, guns and troops, don't you?" Kim Hyong Jik said most earnestly.

"But the Americans are different," Song Se Ho stuck to his erroneous view. "Last year I visited many countries and met Americans. They sympathized with us profoundly and regarded the Japs' actions as unwarrantable."

"Mr. Song, why don't you see that they are a cunning lot who'll pat you on the back while they cut out your liver and eat it? The Americans were the first to stretch the crooked fingers of aggression towards Korea. Have you forgotten how the *USS General Sherman* intruded into our territory and sailed up the Taedong-gang? If the Americans don't like the Japs now, it is only because, as aggressors in Korea they lost a game to the Japs."

Kim Hyong Jik paused for a while. Both Song and Mr. O were silent. Suppressing his rising emotions, Kim Hyong Jik added:

"If the Western powers should tangle with Japan for hegemony over Asia and win and gain supremacy, their object would be to be top dog in the race to eat up Asia. So we would hardly achieve independence with their 'sympathy' and 'aid'.

The only result would be that we would have different barbarian master. Mr. Song, if you truly want to find a way to regain our national rights, you'll have to forget about external forces. That road is a road of national downfall and treachery. Is that not a historical lesson for which we have paid with our blood?" Kim Hyong Jik wound up in a cordial tone. His conclusion was drawn logically and clearly from stern facts.

Mr. O was nodding his head repeatedly.

Song Se Ho cast his bewildered eyes on Kim Hyong Jik. He was still doubtful, and he asked: "But Mr. Kim, do you then mean that, after all, our independence movement has no way out?"

Kim Hyong Jik stared at Song Se Ho and shook his head resolutely, saying, "No, that I do not mean. But I reach a different solution from this analysis of the situation."

"Different solution?"

"In my view, the golden opportunity will come as a result of the fight between Japan and the Western powers for the mastery of Asia. At that moment, we should rise in a nationwide revolt, drive out the Japs and liberate the country by our own force and build a rich, strong civilized state for ourselves."

"Drive out the Japs and liberate the country by our own force?..." Song muttered as if to himself. He seemed to be thinking of something, puffing at his cigarette. Then, with a grin he glanced at Kim Hyong Jik and asked: "But what do you mean by 'by our own force'? Where do you think such a force is to be found?"

Kim Hyong Jik's expression was stern as he stared at Song Se Ho in the face. His reply was prompt:

"We must have faith in the strength of twenty million Korean people."

"Ha, ha, ha, Mr. Kim, that's why I said we must have a reasonable and practical standpoint. Haven't we tried everything by our own efforts? We have been exhausted and sunk to the ground. How do you think that we, bare-handed can drive out the Japanese army which has won many wars and made Japan into a great world power?" Song Se Ho laughed out loud, shaking his head, as if he had recovered his confidence.

"Mr. Song!" Kim Hyong Jik's voice was dignified and his eyes flashed. Barely able to stifle his indignation, he said sternly:

"Don't insult your own people. The Korean people are a

proud, intelligent people who have 5,000 years of history, and time-honoured cultural traditions. Our people created a brilliant culture and tremendous riches and established an honourable civilized state in the East. The pages of our history bear marks of blood spilt by foreign invaders who came across the rivers and the seas, but all of these invaders were repulsed and in those thousands of years our sacred territory was defended by the efforts of the Korean people without help from any 'great power'. No force on earth is greater than the force of a people who are united as one and ready to fight to the death to defend their country. As long as the people remain alive, their country will survive. What is most urgent for us in the independence movement is to have faith that our country will regain her independence, by the united force of the Korean people themselves; to foster our own force so that someday when a golden opportunity arrives, all the people may rise united as one man in a decisive nationwide struggle, crush the enemy and achieve independence. Mr. Song, we must not forget that joining hands with foreign barbarians, no matter who, will lead straight to the road of betrayal of our country and treachery to our people."

The tone of his speech flowed like a great river. Mr. O who had been gazing at Kim Hyong Jik was deeply stirred and nodded his head, mumbling, "I expect you're right, Mr. Kim."

Song Se Ho knocked his ash into the ashtray. His fingers shook.

Kim Hyong Jik left the house with a heavy heart. He had expected to have a frank talk with Song Se Ho on his new plan of national restoration and his programme of action which he had conceived with his whole heart over the past few months, forgetting food and sleep. But he had found that Song Se Ho was ingrained with flunkeyism, with the idea of dependence on foreign forces. Through this gentleman's words he seemed to see the faces of the many involved in the independence movement abroad. Many politicians, speakers and patriots who styled themselves heroes of the present times, had flocked together abroad and sat there talking day and night, working out an empty theory for escaping from the jaws of a wolf into the mouth of a tiger! Was this all they could do? Kim Hyong Jik could not help feeling hollow inside. And yet, his discussion with Song Se Ho convinced him more than ever

that his new plan for national liberation was right. At the same time, he felt a strong urge surging up within him to start work right away to put his plan into effect.

The independence movement which had been on the decline and was virtually facing destruction now, must be put back on its feet. He that once wakes up to the solemn call of history must not remain an onlooker. He who is the first to realize the duty must shoulder the mission and emerge on the arena of history and his time.

Kim Hyong Jik felt his whole body glow with fiery energy, indefatigable fighting spirit and irresistible momentum. He hurried along towards the crooked lane.

As had been arranged, Pang In Su, a student at Sungsil School, was waiting for him there. He had good news: his elder brother-in-law Kang Jin Sok who had been away for more than half a year to study the situation of the independence movement at home and abroad—in Peking and Shanghai—had arrived at Sunan the night before and he would be waiting for Kim Hyong Jik in the pine grove on Mangyong-bong Hill the following afternoon.

Kim Hyong Jik heard Pang In Su's report on the work of a youth association in his charge, and then gave him information about the young patriots in the areas of Sunchon and Anju whom he had personally met on his way back from Chientao, so that they could be absorbed into the youth organization.

He asked him to send a circular postcard written in code to Kim Sok Ha in Kyongsang Province, Chon Yong Tae in Chunggang, Hong Jun Gol in Songchon, Maeng Gyong Jae in Seoul, Cho Pil U in Kangdong and other comrades in various parts of the country. The message said that they should take stock of the work they had done so far and go to Pyongyang in a week. In his mind's eye he saw the comrades whom he had not seen all winter. His heart swelled as he thought of meeting them to discuss the plan for a new turning point in the revolutionary movement.

6

Kim Hyong Jik stopped at the top of the hill above his house.

"Whoa!"

"Hurrah!"

The children's shouts came from the hillside to the right. They ran down through the thick grove of full-grown pine trees. The smallest boy was in the lead riding a broom as a hobbyhorse and flourishing a wooden sword, with six or seven behind him doing the same. Kim Hyong Jik stood watching them and smiled in spite of himself. For he had spotted his son, Jung Son, right away as the boy at the head in a black vest over a light yellow jacket. Although he feared his son might fall, he felt very proud that, playing soldiers he should be leading boys three or four years older than himself.

For some time Kim Hyong Jik watched the boys playing soldiers, and only after the children went over a hillock in a row, singing a song, did he turn away. Back home, he took a belated lunch and then came out. He walked up the lane through the pine grove of Mangyong-bong Hill. The higher he climbed, the thicker the woods became.

The dense pine trees let hardly any sunlight through. The pine-needled floor of the grove was so springy that your feet would sink in ankle-deep. The air was filled with the tang of pine resin.

It was spring, and new needles shot out on the pine twigs. A gentle wind rustled through the treetops, where last year's yellowing pine needles were blowing off the boughs like moulting feathers falling softly to the ground.

Kim Hyong Jik walked on, looking around with deep emotion. He fancied that his stoutly-built brother-in-law might step out from behind some tree at any moment.

He missed him. For nearly ten years he used to meet him in this grove, and this was the first time he had not seen him for more than half a year. His elder brother-in-law was stubborn, upright, intrepid, yet tender, and thinking of him,

picturing him in his mind's eye gave Kim Hyong Jik a keen yearning for him.

Fearing that his brother-in-law might be waiting at the hilltop, he walked quickly to the top, their usual meeting place where the green grass meadow was thirty or forty *pyong* wide. His brother-in-law was not there yet. Kim Hyong Jik looked around for his brother, then stood in the middle of the meadow for a while listening to the desolate sound of the wind through the pine grove. Then he sat down on the grass, pushing aside the skirts of his *turumagi*. He took a magazine out of his inside pocket and opened it, but though his eyes moved across the page he did not take it in. Fluffy white clouds rode on in the sky. A light wind blew and the sounds of waves breaking against the river banks came floating up from the Taedong-gang down beneath.

He saw again the parting with his brother-in-law last autumn. They had parted up here on this grass on a dark, moonless night. His brother-in-law was having to work underground because his part in a raid on a Japanese police substation a few years earlier had come out, and he had entrusted the work with his youth association to one of its leaders, Pang In Su. Sitting face to face among the trees, the brothers had talked all night about the gloomy prospects of the country's independence movement and Kim Hyong Jik had said that he thought that a big change was needed in the Korean independence movement.

Mustering a few comrades, expressing their pent-up patriotic ardour, and making sporadic appeals and occasional raids on Japanese imperialist institutions, he had said, was simply not enough, would get them nowhere near to Korea's independence. And to build up the ebbing independence movement they would need to work out a far-reaching new policy and plan. So they had sat up all night discussing the plan.

They had parted in the grey light of dawn when the stars were fading; Kim Hyong Jik had promised to map out a new plan before they met next time and Kang Jin Sok pledged that he would visit various places at home and abroad and find out how matters stood with them. Putting on the bast sandals offered by Kim Hyong Jik and slinging the bundle of a packed lunch and padded socks which Kang Ban Sok had prepared for him over his shoulder, Kang Jin Sok left the place, the skirts of his *turumagi* fluttering in the early morning wind.

Kim Hyong Jik still carried a clear picture of his brother-in-law as he had seen him then.

More than half a year had passed, and he must have faced many hardships on his long journey all round the country and abroad, sometimes right under the enemy's nose. It made Kim Hyong Jik's heart ache to think of it.

Waking from these thoughts he raised his head. The sun was going down behind the western hills, and at that moment a shadow appeared at the far edge of the pine grove. Kim Hyong Jik jumped to his feet. It was coming towards him. He wore a fur hat and as he walked briskly forward, the skirts of his *turumagi* flapped. It was his brother-in-law.

Kim Hyong Jik stepped forward to meet him, calling out: "Brother!"

Taking off his fur hat Kang Jin Sok called back, "Brother!"

The two men clasped each other's hands. Wisps of vapour rose from Kang Jin Sok's brow which was wet with perspiration. They looked at each other in silence for a while, their placid eyes expressing their emotion. Kim Hyong Jik could not find the right words of sympathy for the hardships Kang Jin Sok had faced.

"You must have had a very hard time away from home," he finally said.

"No, not that hard. I made a pleasant journey across the world to see many things. Ha, ha, ha...," he answered, laughing as heartily as ever. Kim Hyong Jik was delighted to see him in high spirits as always. But he noted the fine wrinkles round his brother-in-law's smiling eyes and on his forehead, the brown mud splashes on his trousers and his worn-out hemp-cord sandals. Kim Hyong Jik could imagine the hard time he must have had in these past months. Kang Jin Sok seemed to read his brother-in-law's mind; for he put on a still brighter mien and asked:

"How are you and your family?"

"We are all well, thank you."

"Is Jung Son growing up healthy and strong? He must be getting quite big."

"He is. He often asks me: 'When will Uncle come?' "

"Ha, ha... I often remembered his handsome face in many a wakeful night in some strange land. He must be a good scholar; he had begun to learn to read and write before I went," said Kang Jin Sok, laughing good-humouredly. His laugh told of

pent-up homesickness.

They went to the grass and sat down. From the hilltop they could look out along the Taedong-gang. Beyond the river was the vast expanse of the Chunghwa plain, and to the northwest Taebo-san and Ryongak-san stood high in the blue sky. It was the familiar scenery of their native village.

Kim Hyong Jik asked, "Are all our comrades faring well?" Kang Jin Sok turned his face towards his brother-in-law and replied: "Yes, they are. I saw Pak Yun Hwan of Unryul, Maeng Gyong Jae of Seoul and Kim Sok Ha of Kyongsang Province, and then went over to Peking and Shanghai where I also met many comrades. All of them asked after you."

"How I wish I could see them," said Kim Hyong Jik, for he missed his comrades badly. Kang Jin Sok continued:

"Our comrades at home and abroad were waiting anxiously for word from you. All said that there must be a new policy or else they would be worried to death. Ha, ha, ha...."

His laugh was so infectious that Kim Hyong Jik laughed too. Kang Jin Sok straightened his face and talked calmly.

"Well now to serious things. Brother, my journey has convinced me that the situation calls for drastic steps, as we were thinking when I left, nay, far more drastic steps. Of course, I'll tell you the actual state of affairs as I have witnessed at home and abroad...."

"No hurry." Kim Hyong Jik said soothingly. "You must come to my home for a rest first. We can talk later."

But Kang Jin Sok shook his head, saying:

"No, I don't think that will do. The blackguards have somehow scented out that I am back in the country. As I was leaving Sunan this morning there was someone on my trail, and I barely managed to throw the swine off. That's why I am so much later than we had arranged. I've heard that you are closely watched now, too, so I think it might not be good for me to come to your house. Let us talk here."

Kim Hyong Jik found it impossible to insist any more. Kang Jin Sok pulled out a tobacco pouch, and rolled himself a thick cigarette. He was a heavy smoker. He inhaled deeply and then breathed the smoke out, looking out far over the lower reaches of the Taedong-gang. Kim Hyong Jik, too, cast his eyes in that direction. The vast Taedong-gang which had just thawed flowed smoothly, freed from the ice that had imprisoned it all winter. The sands at the junction of the Sunhwa-

gang and the Taedong-gang were dazzlingly white; they used to make a fire there, pretending to go mullet-fishing while they spent long nights discussing their work.

Kang Jin Sok went on:

"During my recent journey I met many patriots and members of the independence movement. They were a fair mixture of people, but they fall roughly into several groups. Many of those at home don't know which way to turn so they are sighing away their days, though still resolved to restore our country's independence. A former commander of the Righteous Volunteers Army has buried his gun in the ground and is lying low in the mountains, angry and waiting for an opportunity; some patriots shut themselves up behind the high walls of their houses and live in seclusion doing nothing except rummage in their bookcases and curse the world. Then there are the teachers who are secretly infusing patriotism in the hearts of children in the narrow classrooms of community schools. There are also young patriots, who, pistols or daggers in their bosoms, alone or in groups of two or three, go out killing Japs and collaborators. Meanwhile quite a few people have become rotten. Some who were once in the independence movement have lost all sense of shame. They have turned philistine and money mad and some have even become the Jap agents who inform police against patriots and independence fighters...."

As he said this, Kang Jin Sok's eyes blazed with hate and indignation. Kim Hyong Jik listened in silence, in a meditative mood. After a little pause, the speaker went on:

"As for those abroad, many of them seem to believe in the Western powers, hoping they will bring us our national independence as a present. Some of them pin their hopes on the Yuan Shih-kai government. But on the outbreak of the war in Europe Japan sent her troops to Shantung, Germany's leased territory, and as the Yuan Shih-kai government showed pro-Japanese inclinations, some of them started to make eyes at the Western powers. I hear that they are elbowing each other for the high positions, as if Korea was already independent. The situation is dangerous; if things go on this way, it could be utterly catastrophic."

Finishing his speech, Kang Jin Sok heaved a long sigh.

Kim Hyong Jik had listened to him, looking up at the evening sunshine streaming through the tops of the pine trees. He

turned to face his brother-in-law.

Kang Jin Sok gazed seriously at him. "Brother!" he said, grasping his hand firmly with his. "I came back in great haste for the independence movement has reached a crossroad—it will either survive or go under. We must survive this crisis whatever happens. Mr. Pak Yun Hwan of Unryul, Mr. Kim Sok Ha of Kyongsang Province and all the rest at home and abroad all agree that something drastic must be done."

He looked solicitously at Kim Hyong Jik.

Kim Hyong Jik listened thoughtfully and nodded.

"You are right, Brother. We must open up a new phase. And we have strength enough to do that."

"Where have we such...."

Kang Jin Sok stared at his brother-in-law who spoke confidently.

"Haven't we made all our efforts to rally comrades and educate the masses over the last few years? As a result of our efforts we have quite a few comrades in many places and the mass foundation. Brother, this is our great strength and asset."

"That's right," Kang Jin Sok agreed.

"With this asset we are going to make a great switch-over in the development of the independence movement. So, I intend to have a meeting with comrades in a few days and discuss what is to be done."

Kang Jin Sok stared at his brother-in-law. He instinctively felt some great idea was being formed in his broad forehead and intelligent and meditative eyes.

"Well, when?..."

"Since you are back now, we will meet right away."

"I think you have mapped out some excellent strategy, but it is too dark and I am afraid I can't hear it today."

Kang Jin Sok looked regrettable, and glanced up at the tops of forest over which darkness was descending.

"I have no special strategy. You must be tired after your journey, so take a good rest for a few days. We shall discuss bye the bye."

"Good. I will go downtown now. I will make arrangements for sending messages to comrades and looking after those attending the meeting. Well, then...."

Kang Jin Sok got to his feet and then Kim Hyong Jik also rose. He took his brother-in-law by the hand and earnestly

invited him: "Brother, let's go down and have some supper together quickly. It's dark now, so there won't be any danger."

"Well, then, shall I go down?" Kang Jin Sok said. He seemed to be inclined to accept the invitation. The kitchen smoke of evening was rising from the village chimneys.

"Let's get going."

"A minute, Brother...," said Kang Jin Sok and stood still. "Of course, I'm anxious to see your parents, Jung Son and my sister, but I think I had better not go there today."

"But why?"

"We have a great task before us, so I think we must be careful. You too must play very safe. What if anything should go amiss because of our small personal desires?"

Kim Hyong Jik was deeply moved by this, but he said nothing.

"Don't worry about me," Kang Jin Sok said as if to comfort his brother-in-law. "It's only a step to Potong-bol plain. I'll sup at a tavern in Bbaengdae Street and then go downtown without hurrying."

Kim Hyong Jik felt sorry for his brother-in-law and looked at his face for a few moments. Then he said:

"Then do as you think best, Brother. And by the way when I dropped in at the Hakdang-gol Hotel the other day, I left a suit for you, it is not a very good one, though. So ask them for it and change into it."

"Thank you, I will. Oh, how forgetful I am. Give this to Jung Son. I'm such a shiftless uncle that I've brought him only a trifling present."

Kang Jin Sok produced a paper package and held it out, saying, "It is a children's magazine and a picture book. I don't know if Jung Son will like it."

"Oh, thank you so much, Jung Son will be delighted."

"Well, so long." Kang Jin Sok said. He turned round and walked down the hill, pulling his fur hat well on his eyes. He walked away quickly. Kim Hyong Jik felt an indefinable affection for him. His brother-in-law had been working underground for nearly two years. His parents, wife, children and relations lived within a calling distance, yet he dare not go and see them. It made him all the more determined to fight and he did not waver. His loyal heart was burning with patriotism. Looking after his brother-in-law disappearing through the trees Kim Hyong Jik felt something warm inside him.

7

The night wore on in the city of Pyongyang.

The gloomy sky hung low over it. The Taedong-gang looped round the eastern fringes of the city. Though in the same city, the population lived in two different worlds—a world of "light" and a world of darkness.

The main avenue from Pyongyang Railway Station to the "City Hall" was lined with Japanese shops, behind which Western-style houses stood cheek by jowl. This district was called Yamato-machi, the heart of the city.

Until a few years ago, the city had had no electric light, and the rectangular glassed-in lanterns on the iron lampposts that stood at regular intervals in the streets in this district would be lit. Morning and evening the lamp-lighters went round with ladders on their shoulders, climbing their ladders in the evening to light up, and putting them out again in the early morning, when they took out the lamp chimneys to clean off the lampblack with cotton-wool covered rods.

Around this time rails were laid across this section of the town, from the noodle house by the Taedong-gyo Bridge to Pyongyang Railway Station, for hand-pushed cars to run along. They were open box-wagons made of wood. When they got up speed the pushers would jump up on to them, and get off to push again when they slowed down.

Then came the trams—they only ran through the main streets inhabited mostly by Japanese.

And Japs were poured in pushing the Koreans out to the outskirts of the city to live in dark filthy back alleys in areas with no electric light, or trams, the poorer living in old tumbledown huts and in dugouts without so much as an oil lamp. That was how the Tosongrang slums on the outskirts of the city had come into being. These dark slums and the Japanese quarters in front of the railway station which were brilliantly lit at night made a striking contrast—two worlds, poles apart.

Where in this city in northwestern Korea could any trace

be found of its glorious 1,500 years of history as an ancient capital? Where were its high pride and brilliant records? The walled city of Pyongyang had been the capital of Koguryo, which dominated a vast territory that stretched over thousands of miles beyond the Chongchon-gang and the Amnok-gang Rivers, which was celebrated throughout the world for its resplendent civilization, and famous for its grandeur and valour, which had routed the great armies of Sui and Tang scattering them like so many dead leaves. There had been many trials and vicissitudes in Korea's long history but each time the walled city of Pyongyang had fought valiantly, the country's bulwark faithful to its sacred national and historic mission, defending honourable traditions.

Night advanced on the foot of Mansudae Hill, too. In the black shadow of schools and a church, houses huddled together on a slope. In one of the dark lanes there was a fairly large tile-roofed house with outbuildings. The back room of the main building was brightly lit.

Several people were talking in the room. It was big and had doors front and back. The walls were papered white and the floor was covered with a clean well-woven mat. A small oil lamp hung from at the centre of the ceiling.

Young people were seated around a pottery firebox. Except for Kang Jin Sok and Maeng Gyong Jae, all were in their twenties.

Kang Jin Sok sat in the place of honour, and Maeng Gyong Jae from Seoul, Chon Yong Tae from an army unit commanded by Won Dong Yu in Linkiang, Kong Gi Myong from Nampo, Cho Pil U from Naedong, and the others sat close around him.

Maeng Gyong Jae was engrossed in talking about the struggle against the Fair the Japanese imperialists held in Seoul to mark the "fifth anniversary of the new government".

Though small in build, he had a big face and a conspicuously high forehead. His nose was high-bridged and his deep-set intelligent eyes seemed to radiate a calm and yet profound wisdom. He was somewhere around the thirty, and the impression he made was of a resolute, indomitable character. He wore the plain cotton clothes of a Korean. He was speaking in calm tones.

The Fair had opened in the Kyongbok-gung Palace in Seoul, on October 1, 1915, the fifth anniversary of Japanese colonial rule, the fifth anniversary of the illegal "Korea-Japan Annexation Treaty" signed by the Japs and by Korean traitors. It was a large exhibition of products from every province, held with the absurd ludicrous propaganda aim of showing that Korea's agriculture, industry and commerce had made great progress since the "annexation".

When the noon siren wailed out on the opening day of the Fair, a disturbance broke out in Seoul: a manifesto was distributed. It declared that the "Annexation Treaty" of 1910 was a fraudulent, criminal pact rigged by the Japanese imperialists in collusion with Korean traitors, and it exposed the blatant lie that since the "annexation" the Korean people had made a better living.

The manifesto had been written by Kim Hyong Jik himself, and printed secretly at the Morning Star Printing House by Maeng Gyong Jae, who, with many other comrades, had scattered the leaflets in many parts of Seoul at noon. As luck would have it, a strong wind blew the leaflets all over the city. Maeng Gyong Jae was talking about it now.

In the corner Hong Jun Gol from Chang-gol of Songchon and Kim Sok Ha from Kyongsang Province were playing chess.

Hong Jun Gol had high cheek bones and his face was sunburnt. He looked a simple, honest peasant just in from the fields, and he dressed like a peasant but, whenever he raised his face, his eyes had a glint which showed strong character. In contrast, Kim Sok Ha was big and stout. Everything about him was big—his face, his body, and his features. He was open-hearted and gay. Dressed in a Western suit, his hair well groomed, he had disguised himself to look like a director of some bank or corporation. He bawled triumphantly:

"Brother Hong, I thought you were a good player, but you are having a hard time, eh? I'm going to take your Chariot. What do you say?"

"Rubbish! You chess players from Kyongsang Province are always hunting down the Chariots, but we in Pyongan Province take the King. Go ahead and check me."

"All right, then, don't ask for mercy. I'll check your King! I'll check him with my Chariot first!" Kim Sok Ha challenged loudly, moving his Chariot with a bang.

"The game looks like coming to an end, eh?"

"But who's at bay, Mr. Hong? Well, I'm afraid he needs some help."

Cho Pil U, Chon Yong Tae, Kong Gi Myong and other youths came over to look at the chessboard. Cho Pil U under twenty, still in school uniform, appeared to be the youngest. With a surprised look in his oval face, he studied the chessboard, and said:

"You're in a nice fix, Brother Hong. If your Chariot is taken, won't all your pieces fall like dead leaves blown away in the autumn wind?"

The giant Kong Gi Myong stooped forward and looked down at the board. Laughing aloud he said: "You're going to disgrace western Korea's chess players. If your Chariot had stayed to guard the King, you would have been fine. But why did you move your Horse forward? Maybe he's riding out for a picnic?" Then, he glanced at Kim Sok Ha and said: "Brother Kim, for mercy's sake, take back your move and let him make his move again." Kong Gi Myong had once served in the Righteous Volunteers Army together with Hong Jun Gol. He now had a job as a gymnastics teacher at a community school in Chinnampo through the good offices of Kim Hyong Jik. His big hand picked up Kim Sok Ha's Chariot.

"Ha, ha, ha, if you beg for mercy I'll take back my move," Kim Sok Ha replied with reserve.

"Why all this meddling? Can't you leave the players alone?" burst out Hong Jun Gol, snatching the chessman out of Kong Gi Myong's hand and putting it back in place.

"But playing chess even father and son got help from outsiders to win, you know."

So a wrangle began over the chessboard between the outsiders and Hong Jun Gol. The others, who had been deep in the conversation, also came over to watch the game. But Hong Jun Gol stubbornly refused to ask his opponent to take back his move.

"Ha, then it can't be helped now. Check!" Kim Sok Ha repeated the check with his Chariot. He gave check after check, taking the opponent's Chariot and Cannon, and pressed forward. A couple of moves, and he would win the game.

"Mate!" cried Kim Sok Ha, casting a triumphant look at Hong Jun Gol. "That's the end of the game, I tell you."

"Your mate is premature," Hong Jun Gol retorted. "This takes me out of check, now check to your King!" With that he

picked up his only Chariot and took the opponent's Cannon.

"Hm, now you've really lost, I say?" said Kim Sok Ha, and took Hong Jun Gol's Chariot with his King.

"Who's lost, indeed?" Hong Jun Gol sneered, picking up his controversial Horse and moving it with a bang. "Check!"

"This takes me out of check." Kim Sok Ha moved his King forward.

"Where?" Hong Jun Gol shouted, lifting his Elephant and putting it back on the chessboard.

"What's this? When did your Elephant get there?" Kim Sok Ha asked in a flurry. Both he and Kong Gi Myong opened their eyes in surprise.

"You're done for. Mate." Kong Gi Myong said with a wry smile.

"There, what did I say? I told you that we in Pyongan Province kill the King instead of the Chariots, ha, ha, ha.... I'll spare you this time. Try another move." Hong Jun Gol stretched himself and laughed heartily.

The situation on the board was reversed.

"You've been talking big and haven't the face to beg him to give you a move...," said Maeng Gyong Jae who had been sitting with the skirts of his *turumagi* tucked up, smiling on Kim Sok Ha.

"I wondered why he put that wretched Horse there. He took me in nicely anyway. Oh, hell, I'm beaten!" Kim Sok Ha upset the chessboard and sat back. Many of those present burst out laughing.

"Mr. Hong is skilled in the art of disguise," Kong Gi Myong said to Kim Sok Ha, grinning. "He's an expert, too, in beating the hell out of the Japs."

"Art of disguise?" Kim Sok Ha asked back with a puzzled look, unable to get what Kong Gi Myong was talking about.

"Why, are you going in for gossip?" Hong Jun Gol, suddenly flustered, interrupting Kong Gi Myong. But Kong Gi Myong took no notice and went on:

"A few years ago we went to Kangwon Province with pistols and daggers concealed in our bosoms. They said that the Japanese police chief of a certain county was riding roughshod over the innocent inhabitants, so we raided his house and took care of him, ha, ha...."

"Oh, cut it out for heaven's sake," Hong Jun Gol barked at Kong Gi Myong with a wave of his hand, blushing. This a-

roused curiosity of Chon Yong Tae, a handsome youth, dressed in a neat navy blue Western suit by way of disguise. He came over to Kong Gi Myong, a smile on his robust face.

"Mr. Hong is a great master of disguise. After raiding the police station in broad daylight, he went right past it on a donkey, in a horse-hair hat and a full-dress robe. The policemen didn't recognize him at all and let him pass. I went as his groom holding the donkey's bridle. Ha, ha, ha..." Kong Gi Myong laughed cheerfully.

"Did he, really?" Kim Sok Ha let out in wonder. "It's a novel disguise."

All looked at Hong Jun Gol in admiration. But Hong Jun Gol somehow changed colour and said seriously:

"No more of that, Brother Kong. To tell the truth, it makes me ashamed even to think of those days."

"Why, there's nothing to be ashamed of," Kim Sok Ha protested. "You fought the Japs."

But Hong Jun Gol answered with a more serious expression:

"You couldn't call that a fight. It was mere folly. Of course, in those days our seniors who had been determined to fight, to say nothing of people like me, wandered about not knowing how to fight and did all sorts of silly, reckless things. And many lost their lives to no purpose.... My heart breaks as I think of those days. Now I am here with you from different parts, waiting for Mr. Kim, and this gives me much food for thought."

All of them were looking at Hong Jun Gol in silence. He was in a deeply reflective mood. He carried on with his story:

"After the Righteous Volunteers' Army had broken up and scattered, we wandered aimlessly about the eight provinces with daggers and revolvers in our bosoms, as Brother Kong Gi Myong said, spending the nights in the cold open air. In fact, we had little hope or confidence. Our struggle for the country's independence seemed hopeless and we thought the game was up. We only lived on because we couldn't kill ourselves, I should say. We were in such a desperate mood that we thought if we died fighting the Japs, that would be that. Take what we did last autumn, for example. I happened to meet Brother Kong in a street in Pyongyang. We hadn't met for a long time. We poured out our gloomy, despairing hearts to each other. We thought there was nothing worth living for any more. We decided to make a spectacular fight, and lay in

wait by the highway to Nampo."

He related their assault on a group of Japanese officers. Although they wiped out nearly all their enemies, Hong Jun Gol had a bad stomach wound and Kong Gi Myong was shot in the arm. They escaped to Mt. Ryongak-san, Kong Gi Myong carrying Hong Jun Gol on his back, but the enemy pursued and closed in on them. Their capture was imminent and they decided to kill themselves, when suddenly Kim Hyong Jik appeared in the thicket where they were hiding accompanied by a few people including Pang In Su and Cho Pil U and saved them.

"I often think it is not just my worthless life that Mr. Kim saved last autumn. Mr. Kong will agree with me, I think. He and his wife nursed me with utmost care at their home and restored not only my body but my dying soul. He taught me how to read and write. Not only that, he accepted an ignoramus like me as his comrade and showed me the right path for the independence movement.... Indeed, all this seems to me like a dream."

His voice was keyed up as he spoke.

"Mr. Hong is speaking what is also in my mind," Kong Gi Myong put in, overwhelmed with emotion.

Hong Jun Gol continued:

"Thanks to Mr. Kim's guidance, dumb as I was, I could realize why the tens of thousands of patriots, although they had fought desperately to drive out the Jap invaders, had failed to save the country, only drenching it with their blood. It was simply because the innumerable patriots and people had no leader who could guide them correctly. Aren't I right, Mr. Kang? If there had been an outstanding leader like Mr. Kim, Korea would not have been in this plight."

Hong Jun Gol looked intently at Kang Jin Sok, who nodded his approval.

"Brother Hong has hit the right nail. The same is true of the unit in Linkiang commanded by Won Dong Yu." Chon Yong Tae who was active in Chunggang and Linkiang came forward and said. This youth had a dignified face and body and looked quite composed and grave. He had been Kim Hyong Jik's fellow student at the Sungsil School, and since his graduation last year, had been working in the border areas. "When Mr. Kim Hyong Jik visited us last winter, our unit was in appallingly bad shape. There were only a few men left, and they

were poorly armed and, on top of this, the Japs were intensifying their mopping-up operations against us.... And what was still worse, all the men from the commander down were in the depths of despair. Mr. Kim came and showed us a line of action to strengthen our unit, a far-reaching plan. Then despite the enemy's close watch he personally travelled to the frontier areas, did propaganda among the people to rouse the young men and sent them to our unit. He even helped us to take measures to build up our unit. The spirits of Commander Won Dong Yu and all the men rose sky-high for we realized that with a great leader such as Kim Hyong Jik, our independence movement has a bright future."

The speaker's face was hot.

Kim Sok Ha raised his clean-shaven intelligent face and glanced round at the other comrades, saying calmly, "I dare say all of us here share that feeling."

They all did, though when and how they had first made acquaintance with Kim Hyong Jik differed—Chon Yong Tae and Kim Sok Ha had been with him at Sungsil School and had been guided by him ever since, as he had guided Maeng Gyong Jae, Kong Gi Myong and the rest now in the room, and many other comrades in various places who were absent from this gathering, not to mention Kang Jin Sok, his brother-in-law and childhood friend. Now Maeng Gyong Jae took up the thread:

"Now I think we could say that we who have come from all corners of the country to receive Mr. Kim's instruction, are the luckiest of all the independence champions in this country."

Chon Yong Tae broke in:

"So I think we present here have great responsibilities to fulfil. Whether or not we carry out his precepts correctly will decide the future of the Korean independence movement, will it not?"

"Right," Kim Sok Ha said, with an excited look in his high cheek-boned big face. "I believe we must always fight selflessly without grudging our lives to carry out his teachings. Don't you think so?"

There was a silence in the room. Cho Pil U looked anxiously at the door, and said, "I wonder why Mr. Kim hasn't come yet."

"He'll be here soon, Pang In Su has been sent for him," Kang Jin Sok replied.

"Do you know why Mr. Kim has summoned us this time?" Kim Sok Ha asked anxiously.

Kang Jin Sok smiled faintly but did not answer.

Kong Gi Myong looked round at the other people and, as if to seek their agreement, commented:

"This is the first time he has summoned many people like this. Anyhow it's obvious that he has conceived some new plan which might well be a turning point in the Korean independence movement...."

Everyone was speculating in his own way.

Just then footsteps were heard from the courtyard. They all looked up towards the door as they heard someone on the earth veranda. There was a light cough and the door was opened. All were up on their feet and called out, "Mr. Kim," their eyes shining with joy.

Kim Hyong Jik in a *turumagi* entered the room with a smile, taking off his soft hat as he came in.

"How do you do?" he said, hugely delighted to see the dear comrades and he shook hands all round. "I'm so glad to see you. It must have been hard for you coming all this way to be here. I'm really glad to see you!"

Behind him came Pang In Su in a school cap and a black *turumagi,* a scarf round his neck, rubbing his face flushed from the cold wind.

8

Kim Hyong Jik was seated in the place of honour and all the others sat around him.

The glass chimney of the oil lamp was sooty now. The room was silent. Hong Jun Gol had just finished his report on his activities over the last months. He was the last to report. Now they were all waiting for Kim Hyong Jik to speak. But he remained silent, pressing down the ashes in the pottery firebox with the fire tongs.

He poked the fire tongs deep in the ashes. Through a cleft in the ashes red-hot charcoal could be seen. Slowly raising his head, he looked steadily at the comrades one by one. He had

been profoundly affected by their reports. They had talked quietly as usual as if they had been talking about some trifling everyday affairs. But in every word of their simple yet unaffected account he saw the traces of the bloody fights they had waged against the enemy over the past months, risking their lives at every step. They were trustworthy and precious comrades. Looking around at them, he felt warm inside. He thought that fighting side by side with these dependable comrades, he could press forward fearlessly, no matter how long and how thorny the road to independence. His heart beat with a strong desire to talk frankly to them about everything. But he controlled his excitement and, when his heart had calmed down, began to talk quietly.

"You have had many troubles over the past months. We can say that the immediate objects of our activities have basically been achieved. We must ascribe this to the devoted struggle you have carried on, denying yourselves all personal comforts."

He praised his comrades from the bottom of his heart. The strained faces of the comrades who had been watching him, relaxed.

He knew their thoughts well. They all had faith and pinned their hopes on national resurrection, they had denied themselves all comforts and enjoyment without regret for this one goal. So they felt sad and anguished when they failed in their tasks or their missions were unsuccessful and great joy when they considered that they had done the little they could in the cause of Korean independence.

As he saw in their reassured looks their unpretentious yet rigorous and sober philosophy of life, his heart swelled. At the same time, he felt anew the heavy responsibility that rested on his shoulders for guiding and helping these comrades in their struggle. I must open up broad vistas to national resurrection which these comrades long for and must invigorate and encourage them and show them how to advance fearlessly. With them I must go out into the field of battle to revitalize the Korean independence movement which now is at such a low ebb. With these thoughts Kim Hyong Jik continued:

"We are gathered here this time to sum up our past activities and to discuss a more important problem."

The comrades gazed at him soberly. He went on:

"For years we here have waged a revolutionary struggle devotedly, with a single heart, for the great cause of national

restoration. We have fought, facing death at every step, going through every sort of hardship. The enemy's bullets and gallows have taken many a dear comrade who fought side by side with us, comrades whom we sadly mourn. But what is still sadder is, that although we have fought our way through great hardship and danger, our independence movement has not yet found the right path. This is deplorable.

"It is now sixty years since the barbarians of the East and the West invaded and started to swallow up our country. These years literally makes a history of bloody struggle; every footstep of the patriots and the people of this country is soaked with blood. And still Korea perished. Now, in all parts of the country—towns and villages, fields and mountains—there are ardent independence fighters and patriotic youths ready at all times to lay down their lives like bits of straw. They cannot sleep for thinking of the bitter fate of the country. At this moment there may be a patriot mounting the steps to the gallows dragging iron fetters at his heels, shouting in his last moment: "Long live the independence of Korea!" He will breathe his last, his eyes wide open, looking up, through tears of blood, at a dark sky that gives no echo to his shout. As you see, even now, our nation is fighting a bloody battle, though our independence movement is on the decline as hopes of national resurrection fade from month to month...."

Kim Hyong Jik paused, staring at the dancing shadow of the lamplight on the opposite wall. His eyes had a faraway look. The faces of others who were watching him were grim and clouded.

"Mr. Kim!" Hong Jun Gol called in a hoarse voice, leaning forward, his large, sensitive eyes gleaming with indignation. "What should we do, then? Do you mean that our independence movement is hopeless?"

The other people were silent, their eagerly solicitous eyes were all riveted on Kim Hyong Jik.

Slowly he turned his eyes on his comrades. After studying their faces, he shook his head.

"No, I do not mean that," he said. "I only wanted to tell you that this agonizing situation calls on us to carve out a new path."

Though his voice was calm, his tone was resolute and suggested strength and conviction. All their faces were strained. They had never been able to fathom the deep mind of their

leader, but their experience of him made them feel intuitively that there was some great idea at the bottom of his mind. He continued:

"This is a bitter lesson taught us by half a century of bloody history, of national downfall. But it also dictates to us about the future. For having lost our way, no matter how hard we struggle, we must sink deeper into the abyss, flounder in the quagmire. 'Save the independence movement which is sinking into the slough of stagnation and ruin! Find a new course that has bright prospects!' This is the solemn task history has set Korean revolutionaries. But where is it, that new path, that new course that we must steer?"

Kim Hyong Jik paused and looked round the comrades who had been listening closely without so much as blinking. He went on:

"We are like a man who has gone astray in deep mountains. If he loses his head and scurries around this ridge and that ravine, he will not find his path and will at last fall down dead in the mountains. But if he keeps a cool head and boldly climbs up to a high peak, and looks around at the hills, ravines and streams, he will find a way. The same is true of us. It is absolutely vital for us to decide on the right course now, to devise a new plan, a new strategy and then to steel ourselves to carry it out. So we must climb up to a high peak of history and open our eyes wide to get a broad view of the current drift of the intricate international situation and the conditions of our independence movement; and we must study these questions: What is the likely future trend in the international situation and which path should our independence movement, now in agony, take? Which rugged mountains and which deep ravines should we negotiate, how should we cross them to blaze our new path? So let me first begin with this: What, then, is the present drift of the international situation?..."

As they realized his profound intentions, they all began to look animated.

He spoke plainly and, as he had done a while ago in the argument with Song Se Ho at Mr. O's house, he analysed the causes and trends of the World War and went into the conflicts between the great powers and the prospects of their development taking one example after another. He amplified the different problems point by point. And as he went on, the thick mist that had veiled the true face of the world lifted

and gave way to light.

Everybody in the room had grown up seeing and hearing many things that had happened in this world, yet today they seemed to see the world in its nakedness for the first time. As they listened to Kim Hyong Jik, they were struck with surprise and wonder.

Furthermore, he made a thoroughgoing analysis of the struggle for supremacy which would take place in the Orient between Japan and the Western powers, and pointed out that their rivalry would offer a golden opportunity to the Koreans and that if the whole nation rose and took this opportunity, they could regain the right to their own government. He added:

"...Such being the internal and external situation, if we set ourselves a definite goal and cross a few steep mountains without losing heart at the grim present, our nation will find the path that will lead to a bright world. Everything depends on our having the confidence and determination and fighting on. We must set a high aim and dedicate our lives to it. And if we fail, we will hand the task on to our children. So, if we work hard with the unflagging resolve to achieve that aim at any cost, we will lead twenty million Koreans to a bright new world."

His voice rose as he reached the peroration. The comrades all watched him silent, with flushed faces.

"Mr. Kim!" Hong Jun Gol was the first to break the silence. "Your words have opened our eyes. We are ready to lay down our lives on the road of revolution. Please just tell us what to do."

He said this in a trembling voice, trying to control his strong emotions. His words expressed the thoughts of all present.

Kim Hyong Jik was stirred and glanced at the flushed faces of the comrades. He said:

"I appreciate your attitude for I am certain that your unanimous support, our unity will bring our cause success. Now let us discuss our immediate tasks. First it is urgent now to develop Korea's own national forces. Therefore we will have to unite the whole nation, all the independence fighters. This needs a leading centre capable of guiding the whole nation forward along a set course. If we build even a small house, we start by laying the foundation stones, then put up pillars and

beams. The same is true of our struggle. We cannot hope to unite the nation and all the independence fighters without a strong leading centre. What, then, should this centre be?"

He answered this question himself.

"It is an organization. It is necessary to set up an organization that is capable of playing a central role in the independence movement."

There was a hum of voices: "An organization?" "Well, an organization capable of playing the central role...." and so on.

"Yes, we must set up an organization," Kim Hyong Jik emphasized, and continued:

"So how do we begin? Needless to say, we should muster comrades and build up the backbone of the organization and educate broad masses in patriotism against Japan so as to lay the foundation of the organization. For the last few years we have made great efforts and achieved a considerable success. But we still have many things to do to build up the organization. But people have flocked together before in groups and put up signboards; there have been a motley of independence organizations. We are not going to set up that kind of organization. Our idea is an organization, an independence movement that represents the whole nation, that is capable of leading and supervising the independence movement both at home and abroad. This calls upon this small group of ours to rally hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of comrades all over the country. And we do not just mean to gather waifs and strays. We must meet people one by one and firmly implant in them our far-reaching policy and ideas. Thus, we shall rally stout, true comrades who are ready to dedicate their lives to our cause. This is far harder than rushing at the enemy with a bomb in a do-or-die skirmish. But if we form the leading centre of Korea's independence movement, uniting all the people around it, make the twenty million Koreans turn out as one man in a showdown with the enemy, our beloved Korea will greet the spring of resurrection. So we must tide over bottlenecks and hardships with an iron will and great ardour and knit together the independence movement all over the country.

"You must remember that our goal is far away, that our path is thorny. But that path is the only true path Korean revolutionaries must follow.

"That is about all I have to say. Now I would like to hear

your frank opinions; then we can discuss specific measures for action. Please speak out."

Kim Hyong Jik's speech was over. The room was silent. Everyone was breathing hard, their chests rising and falling, overwhelmed by their swelling emotions. Unable to find proper words to utter, they stared at him, their faces flaming.

"Mr. Kim," said Maeng Gyong Jae in a soft quivering voice to break the silence.

Kim Hyong Jik turned towards Maeng Gyong Jae. There was a gentle glitter in Maeng's moist eyes. He could not speak out. "Mr. Kim!" he called again, with growing tremor in his voice. The corners of his mouth twitched slightly. Whether he was trying to force a smile or keep back a sob, was hard to tell. Suddenly teardrops glistened in the corners of his eyes, and the next moment the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Mr. Kim," he cried in a choky voice, moving towards Kim Hyong Jik.

"Brother Maeng" Kim Hyong Jik called back, feeling a lump in his throat; he leaned forward and firmly grasped his hands in spite of himself.

Without bothering to wipe away his streaming tears, Maeng sat looking into Kim Hyong Jik's face.

"At long last...at long last...we twenty million...have found the right path...," he faltered out, his throat contracted. The tears were still coursing down his cheeks. Yet his eyes were smiling. Kim Hyong Jik felt a prickling sensation in his nose. He could not find words to answer him, and only tightened his grip of Maeng's warm hands.

There were tears in every eye—Kang Jin Sok, Kim Sok Ha, Hong Jun Gol, Pang In Su's and all the rest.

There were light footfalls in the courtyard. It was the master of the house standing watch. Night was wearing on in Pyongyang.

The meeting lasted till dawn. Kim Hyong Jik set out immediate tasks, gave out the assignments and made necessary organizational arrangements.

The tasks fell roughly into two categories: mustering many comrades from the independence movement scattered all over the country and abroad, and going out among the masses and awakening them to train large numbers of new independence movement fighters.

It was also decided to set up schools, open night classes

and form youth associations, enlightenment organizations, mutual-aid guilds and the like, using every possible method, legal and illegal.

The work assignment for individual comrades was discussed: Kang Jin Sok would lead work all over southern Korea.

Hong Jun Gol was to settle in Songchon, his homeland, and work with young people in that vicinity, in order to train many comrades. Kyongsang Province was assigned to Kim Sok Ha, and the Seoul area to Maeng Gyong Jae.

Chon Yong Tae was to go back to his unit and report to Commander Won Dong Yu of the discussion, keep expanding and strengthening the armed force, and spread Kim Hyong Jik's far-reaching plan far and wide to the inhabitants of the neighbouring border areas and train new comrades. It was decided that Kong Gi Myong from Nampo would be sent to Won Dong Yu's unit as chief of staff.

Pang In Su's task was to direct the youth association in Pyongyang as before in line with Kim Hyong Jik's new policy, at the same time working in the northern districts of South Pyongan Province—Anju, Kaechon and Sunchon.

Lastly Kim Hyong Jik mentioned his plan to move his zone of activity. He was to direct the Korean revolution as a whole in the future, but in the present situation Mangyongdae where he now lived was not suitable for this, for the Japanese gendarmes and police were already watching him and their spies and officials haunted the area. Also the village was in open country so it would not be easy to keep contact with other districts there.

Kim Hyong Jik intended to move to Naedong, Kangdong County, where Cho Pil U was working as a teacher.

The place had many advantages. It was a hilly area on a river where the Japs were less watchful. Moreover, the area was surrounded by rugged mountains. And through the mountains there were links with Taedong, Kangdong, Songchon, Sunchon and other counties of Pyongan Province which had strong anti-Japanese traditions, also with Hwanghae and Kangwon Provinces and, further, with North Pyongan Province beside the Amnok-gang River. On top of this, it was not far from Pyongyang and access was easy by land or water, so it was a good centre for keeping in touch with all parts of the country.

Since Kim Hyong Jik should move to Kangdong, he said

that Cho Pil U should leave Naedong and enrol at Sungsil School to take over the leadership of the student and youth movement in Pyongyang.

Day was breaking, but the sun was not yet up. A sullen overcast sky hung low over the Sadong plain beyond the river. The plain and river which had been harassed by nightmare all through the night greeted another painful and humiliating day with a frown, little knowing that a new page of history had been turned during the night.

9

The sun shone all day long and in the evening a gentle breeze blew up, wafting the fragrance of spring. Baby chicks hatched only yesterday, were pecking at their feed in the sun. They raced each other round the hen and now and then even tried to fight, cheeping noisily. It was nearly sunset on a warm spring day.

Kim Hyong Jik walked along a lane in the pine grove leading up to Mangyong-bong Hill, holding the future Marshal by the hand. The sunlight streamed tenderly through the pine grove and a sweet breeze swept past rustling the pine needles and tickling the roots of their ears.

Kim Hyong Jik who had been silent for a while stopped and turned round to look down over the village. The whole stretch of Nam-ri which was now bustling with life in the breath of spring was within a sweep of his eye. Peasants were busy in the fields. Although the land was meagre they worked it by the sweat of their brows. It was sad that they should have to toil to scratch a living from this infertile land.

From the time of their forefathers this district of Nam-ri had been called Mangyongdae (Place of Ten Thousand Scenes—*Tr.*) and known as a most propitious burial-ground. On the Taedong-gang River not far from Pyongyang, the scenery here was really beautiful, so the noble and the rich in Pyongyang had vied with each other to buy land here and buried their dead. They placed grave keepers to look after their family cemeteries. So there were many grave-keep-

ers' cottages here in Mangyongdae.

But the poor villagers of Nam-ri were too preoccupied with their domestic cares to find time to enjoy the beautiful scenery. They called Mangyongdae "a paradise for dead gentry and a hell for the living". They were forbidden to cut a single twig on Mangyong-bong Hill the whole of which belonged to the noble and the rich. Even in death they were not allowed to be buried in their native place, their bodies had to be carried away to some other place to be interred.

Nevertheless, people lived on stoutly, pinning their hopes on tomorrow. People were busy preparing for the sowing—it seemed that the spring had come to their hearts before it reached the fields.

Presently he turned his eyes towards his house. In the dusk of the evening smoke was rising from the chimney of his low-eaved house. His wife came out with a water jar on her head and walked towards the well.

His grandmother was driving the chicks into their pen before dark. She was walking carefully. His father took down ears of maize that were hung on a wall for seeds, and began to sort them. His mother was going into the kitchen with a basketful of chopped straw to boil to feed the ox.

His youngest brother went behind the stable and scraped together the scattering of dirty straw and set it on fire. A column of smoke rose from the burning straw, increasing the charms of spring. His next younger brother was coming back from the fields behind an ox with a packsaddle. He had been carrying manure out to the fields.

Looking down at his home and family in the evening sun, Kim Hyong Jik was meditative. He must leave his home and native village, go away perhaps, for ever, leaving the heavy burden of making a livelihood to his parents, brothers and wife.

Kim Hyong Jik first visited Hwanghae Province, where Pak Yun Hwan, his old mate at Sungsil School and now a township school teacher, and a few other comrades were active. With them he discussed problems of building up the backbone for an anti-Japanese organization to be set up and of intensifying the campaign to educate the masses to oppose Japan. And he also helped them map out necessary measures.

Back home, after seeing off his comrades who had received new assignments and set off with renewed courage, he

had spent busy days.

He had had to hand over his duties at Sunhwa School, and help Cho Pil U to enrol in Sungsil School. Then he had had to study the situation of the Kangdong area and work out a detailed plan for his future activities.

The day of departure was approaching. Word came from Naedong that Cho Pil U had reached an understanding with the old man Chong Jin Gu, the proprietor of Naedong private school, and was waiting for Kim Hyong Jik with everything ready. The old man had prepared the outhouse room of his house for his lodging and was now waiting for him impatiently, the message said. Pang In Su had left Sungsil School as he had promised and came with his things. In the daytime Kim Hyong Jik had taken Pang In Su to the school and handed over to him. And now, in the evening glow of the spring day he was walking up the hill with his son.

His wife was returning from the well carrying the water jar on her head with an upturned gourd dipper in it.

The water jar had been repaired many times since her marriage, and it seemed still to be leaking a bit, for she kept wiping drops of water off the bottom of the jar with her hand as she walked.

Kim Hyong Jik had confided his intention of leaving home to Kang Ban Sok.

"If you must go, you must," his wife said readily. "I'm not in a position to help you in your great work to reclaim the country, but I'll manage the household affairs all right."

He was grateful to his wife for her ready agreement to his plan to leave, although she was shouldering the heavy burden of keeping house for the large family.

Kim Hyong Jik who had watched his wife going into the courtyard with the water jar on her head thought that he would quietly broach the matter to his parents in the evening and then leave home. He called to his son, "Let's go, Jung Son!"

The future Marshal, who had been examining sprigs of grass bursting out on the sunny side of the hill came running and took his father's hand. He walked fast to keep pace with his father.

They walked along the winding path in the pine wood. It was the kind of sunset when you feel calm inside and become thoughtful. It was a deserted lane, such as would encourage

you to quietly confide your troubled thoughts to a friend.

As they walked up, alarmed birds flapped their wings and flew away. A pair of croaking magpies flew towards the pine wood from the Sunhwa-gang to return home to roost.

Kim Hyong Jik stopped short on the crest of Mangyong-bong Hill. Before his eyes stretched a sublime view of Mangyongdae, bathed in the evening sun. The western sky had a light mauve tinge, and strips of violet clouds were floating over the peak of Mt. Taebo-san which towered majestically in the distance. The evening glow gilding the upper fringe of the clouds dyed the waters of the river, the fields and the mountain ridges a beautiful orange.

Mangyongdae was always beautiful. From his boyhood he liked to climb to the top of Mangyong-bong Hill at dawn and at dusk and feast his eyes on the beauty of the landscape unfolding before him in the crimson glow of the sun. Nature suggested something meaningful and sensitive.

As he gazed at the scene of his native village on the eve of his departure, his emotions were particularly profound.

Kim Hyong Jik who had been standing excited turned round and looked at his son. The future Marshal was standing in the golden dry turf, the crimson evening glow reflecting on his bright open face. His clear eyes shone, fascinated and excited.

He had watched his son's expression, and sat down on a nearby rock and gazed at him affectionately.

"Jung Son," he called softly, not to disturb his fascinated son. The future Marshal slowly turned his head.

"Yes, Father," he answered.

"Do you like our Mangyongdae?"

"Yes, I do," Jung Son replied with a bland smile, nodding his head.

"What do you like best?"

The future Marshal silently turned his eyes and watched the evening scene for a while. Then he looked round at his father again and answered:

"Everything. But I like the sun best of all. It's all burning."

"The sun? Well, indeed, the sun is best!"

The father was pleased to find his son so sensitive and yet grave and profound in expressing himself. The future Marshal approached his father. The father picked him up and took him

on his lap. Looking lovingly at him, he said:

"As you said, everything in Mangyongdae is fine. But our country is beautiful everywhere. Not only the landscape is beautiful, it is also full of treasure and very nice to live in. The fields give us mountains of rice, the seas swarm with all sorts of fish and, underground, there is plenty of treasure such as gold and silver. Our Korea is the best country in the world. That is why from olden times robbers have wanted to take our country and often wormed their way in here. Look at there, in front of the island of Tudan."

Jung Son who had been listening attentively looked in the direction that his father pointed. The Taedong-gang wound round the island. Puffing black smoke, a tug boat was sailing downstream pulling a string of barges, five or six of them, all loaded with cargoes.

"Oh, so many boats!" Jung Son exclaimed.

"They are robbers' boats," said Kim Hyong Jik, glaring at the boats.

"What? Robbers' boats?" asked back Jung Son, his eyes wide-open.

"Yes, those boats belong to robbers. In those boats the Japs who have stolen our country are even now carrying away the crops your grandparents raised all summer by the sweat of their brow and the treasure of our country."

As the father said this, the future Marshal started to his feet and clenched his fists, staring fiercely at the Japanese boats.

"But why do you leave the robbers alone, Father? We must take back our things from them." Jung Son was indignant, ready to rush down.

"It won't do to attack them alone," said the father, hugging his son's shoulders. "The robbers have crept into our country and are swarming all over it. The other day when you went to Pyongyang with me you saw Jap soldiers swaggering about the streets, and you saw that they had swords and guns?"

"Yes, I saw them."

"Only when we have finished off all of those big robbers, can we finish off these robbers."

"When are we going to finish off the big robbers?"

"We'll do it before long. All the Koreans are now fighting to do away with them."

The son looked up straight into the father's face. Then

he asked, "Are you fighting too, Father?"

"Ha, ha, ha, of course, I am. I'm going to fight a big battle against the robbers. I must leave home in the morning to fight," said the father, laughing. But as he gazed into his son's clear wide-open eyes, he felt a lump in his throat.

"Leave home?" asked Jung Son.

The father nodded his head. Jung Son looked up at his father silently for a few moments, and then said:

"Father, I'll fight the Japs with you some day when I grow up!"

"You are a good boy, my Jung Son."

Much pleased, the father drew his son's shoulders towards himself, continuing:

"Of course, you'll fight. To do so, you must get up early in the morning, do exercises, wash your body clean with cold water, even if I'm not at home. And you must obey your grandmother and help her well. You must also learn Korean well from your mother, to be a good man with a strong body and soul."

"I will, Father!" replied the future Marshal with a serious and determined look, his eyes shining.

The father sat silent, and stroked his son's head.

The sun appeared from behind the clouds and shone over the Taedong-gang. The river, all aflame, meandered through the plain into the hazy distance where fields and the sky fused into one.

Next morning all the family finished their breakfast very early. Jung Son, too, got up earlier than usual to see his father off.

The time came for departure. Kang Ban Sok held out a *turumagi* that smelled of fresh starch for her husband.

Looking at his wife who hung her head slightly, Kim Hyong Jik felt sad and his heart overflowed with tenderness.

They had been married for nearly ten years. Their whole married life had been a heavy burden on her. She was the eldest daughter-in-law in this large family of twelve; she had to take care of the poor household, always worrying about keeping something in the pot. She worked hard from early morning to the small hours. all year round.

She had not only run the scanty household for her hus-

band who was absent from home nearly all the time but also helped him in his work. But she had lived on stoutly with little rest or sleep. Though she was so busily occupied with housekeeping, she zealously educated her son, and they said that recently she had even taught her younger sister-in-law how to read and write Korean.

Kim Hyong Jik's heart was full of trust in and warm affections for her.

Suddenly what had taken place a few years before flashed through his mind. One day he had returned home at midnight with a comrade who had been out with him on a mission. He had told his wife to prepare a meal. After a while a loud clanging of pots sounded from the kitchen.

Next morning, when their guest had left he admonished his wife about the noise. She lowered her head, blushing.

"I'll be careful. It will never happen again," she replied and said nothing more.

It was long before he found out that she had made the noise that night because there was not enough oil in the lamp and she had been overcareful in the semi-darkness and made the blunder.

Leaving home now, he felt a pang at the thought of this. He received great encouragement and warm love from his wife who tacitly devoted her all to the revolutionary movement and gave him strong support.

"Thanks," said the husband. This monosyllable contained the flood of emotions awakened in his breast. Now he took the *turumagi* from his wife and put it on. The width, outer collar and neckband fitted him perfectly. A faint smile flickered on Kang Ban Sok's face. He took up a small bundle which lay on the desk and rose to his feet.

"Let me carry it," said Kang Ban Sok, taking the bundle from her husband.

Jung Son stood up after his father, asking: "Father, are you really leaving now?"

"Yes, I'm leaving."

"Will you come home sometime?"

"Of course. While I'm away, you must be a good boy to your elders," Kim Hyong Jik said in a soft voice, holding his son's hands in his.

"Yes, Father, I will."

"And you must study hard with your mother."

"What about playing soldiers?..."

"Oh, yes. Do play at soldiers, of course, and become a general," answered the father smilingly, and stared at his son's face. The future Marshal grinned. There was a soft smile also on the face of Kang Ban Sok who had been watching the parting between father and son.

"Teach Jung Son well," said the husband, turning towards his wife.

"Yes, I'll see to that. Don't you worry about home."

Kim Hyong Jik believed in his wife. So he said nothing further, opened the door and went out.

All the family were out in the yard. His younger brother Hyong Rok was loading an A-frame carrier with a wicker trunk. The weather was fine. The sky over the towering Mangyong-bong Hill was turning grey as the day was breaking. Kim Hyong Jik wanted to part with his family in the courtyard, but all the family trooped outside after him to see him as far as the ferry.

He walked at their head along the lane which led to the ferry over the pass. After him came his family through the dew-laden dry grass. His trousers and the lower hems of his *turumagi* were wet.

Coming up to the crest of the slope, he stopped and looked down on the whole scene of Mangyongdae. Gauzy milk-white mists were hovering over the rivers and the hillocks, ravines, and groves which were wet from the drizzle of the previous night. Mangyong-bong Hill spread out in many spurs in all directions. The pine groves on the hills washed by the recent rain looked unusually fresh and green. At the feet of the hills there were nooks in which the villages of Chik-gol, Cha-gol, Kin-gol and Solsae-gol nestled cosily. Bluish smoke was rising from the chimneys of the farm houses. The smoke did not rise high and trailed along. It floated out of the ravines and spread in a thick layer over the plain in front of Nam-ri and the wide expanse of waters at the junction of the Sunhwa-gang and the Taedong-gang.

Kim Hyong Jik went on his way. The whole party got to the river bank. A cool breeze blew on the river and a fishy smell was in the air. The soft-violet morning glow was reflected on the seemingly still waters of the Taedong-gang. A mist hung over the waters. Beyond the river stretched the vast Chunghwa plain as far as the eye could see. A flock of birds were flying

across the clear sky of the early morning over the open fields. A boat was moored at the ferry below the bank, rocking quietly on the water.

Hyong Rok went down the bank to the waterside with the A-frame carrier on his back. Kim Hyong Jik turned to his family. He bowed low to his grandmother and parents. Then, stroking the head of Jung Son who was standing by his mother holding a fold of her skirt, he said, "Good-bye, Jung Son." He got into the boat. Kang Ban Sok held out the bundle with both hands.

"Farewell to you," the husband said, taking the bundle. It was all he could say, though his heart was full.

"I wish you good health and ... success...."

"Thank you!"

He was grateful that his wife did not shed tears at parting; she was seeing him off with serene eyes.

"Father!" Jung Son shouted, waving a farewell to him. His son's face was not without a shadow of sadness. The father waved back.

"Shall I push off?" the boatman holding a pole in his hands asked quietly.

"Yes, let's go," Kim Hyong Jik answered firmly.

The boatman thrust his pole into the water with a splash. The boat swayed and left the shore and floated out on the water. The ferryman shipped his pole with a bump, spattering drops of water. He took up the scull and worked it. The scull creaked, breaking the quiet of the ferry. The boat glided silently towards midstream, the ripples breaking gently against its sides.

Kim Hyong Jik stood in the bow looking at the receding river bank. A light mist hung over the shores. Mangyongbong Hill soared up above it like an island. His family were standing there at the foot of the hill, seeing him off. His two younger brothers, his wife and Jung Son were down at the waterside, his grandmother up on the slope, and his father at the top. He could not see his mother among them. Where could she be, he wondered. His eyes searched the shore. He was surprised to see his mother far away from the family, walking along the waterside as the boat rowed upstream. His mother's warm love touched his heart, and moved him to tears.

He waved his hand to his mother in spite of himself,

faltering out: "Mother, go home now, please!"

Perhaps she heard him. She stopped, and stood staring after him. The hem of her skirt fluttering gently in the wind. The boat went on farther and farther, and his mother's white figure grew smaller and smaller.

Kim Hyong Jik's heart warmed to her. He recalled the days when he had been a poor boarding student in Pyongyang several years ago. One summer day his mother brought young radishes she had grown to the market on the outskirts of the city and sold them for two *won*. She even skipped her lunch so as to spare the money and give as much as possible to her son who was working hard through school. She brought the money to the school, but she stopped outside the gate. She saw before her an imposing Western-style brick building and students smartly dressed in serge uniforms going in and out carrying their school bags. Thinking of her own poor attire and her son's worn-out uniform, she did not dare walk in.

At last she made up her mind and spoke to a student going through the gate. She asked him to tell Kim Hyong Jik that a relation of his from Turu Island had come and wanted to see him. Her son came out wondering who it could be. When he found his mother standing alone outside the gate, he asked her why she had not come in. His mother explained the reason, putting the two *won* in his hand. Kim Hyong Jik took the mother by the hand and said in a choked voice:

"Mother, why didn't you say proudly that you had come to see your son? It's no sin to be poor. The real sinners are the rich idlers who live in luxury...."

While he was lost in memory, the boat had moved out to midstream where the mist began to disperse. The ferryman hoisted the sail, which fluttered in the wind, as it ran up the mast. The sail full-blown, the boat began to glide upstream. The morning glow dyed the white sail violet. A water-bird, newly awake, flew upstream over the top of the mast with plaintive cries.

The dear fields and mountains of his native village and the figures of his dear family were receding into the distance. He could see his son clearly standing in the front, waving his hand and shouting: "Good-bye... Fa-ther...!" His ringing voice came through the gauzy veil of mist, spreading over the waters with a lingering echo.

He could still make out the tiny figure of his mother

standing well apart from the others on the shore. The sailing boat was gliding fast before a fair wind, increasing the distance between them.

Kim Hyong Jik said to himself:

"Mother, your son will fight on, body and soul, in the cause of independence."

CHAPTER II

MYONGSIN SCHOOL

1

Chong Jin Gu lived in the upper village of Naedong, Tongsam-ri, Koup Sub-county, Kangdong County. The old man had an excellent reputation in the neighbourhood.

He had learned Chinese classics at the village schoolhouse till he was about ten, and was the only literate person in the village of Naedong. Once he opened a private class in the upper room of his house and taught Chinese classics to his own and his relations' children and to children from the poor families.

But changes in the times convinced him of the futility of teaching the younger generation the Chinese classics. What, after all, was the use of teaching Chinese classics in our time, he wondered. They begin with the ideographs "Sky, earth...." There is no end to learning the classics and they are anyway not our own literature. If we had no letters of our own, it might be another matter. But we Koreans have an excellent alphabet of our own. Yet, noblemen and bureaucrats respected only Chinese ideographs, calling that "real" writing, forbidding the use of the "rubbishy" Korean alphabet.

Chong Jin Gu had an urge to discard the outdated Chinese ideographs and teach the younger generation modern science in the Korean alphabet. He realized bitterly that the Korean people had lost their country for the first time in their history because the noblemen and bureaucrats were flunkeys who worshipped moss-covered Chinese classics, shackled to the *Chu Hsi* school.

Presently a school building had been put up on Chong Jin Gu's initiative. He had looked for a teacher and chosen

a youth who had moved into Sangbami from Songchon with his family. He was none other than Cho Pil U.

Cho Pil U had been through primary school and was no older than his pupils. So he was not much of a teacher. He worked hard, but the school was not well run. As the winter passed into the farming season, the pupils absented themselves, and the school only existed in name. The bell went, but there were no children.

This school in Naedong was where Kim Hyong Jik was coming to teach. Cho Pil U had told Chong Jin Gu about Kim Hyong Jik some time ago and the old man had been very interested and asked him to bring him at all costs. So now Kim Hyong Jik was coming to the school.

The boat reached Maekjon ferry at about noon.

Cho Pil U and the old man Chong Jin Gu were there to meet Kim Hyong Jik, and Cho Pil U introduced him to old Chong Jin Gu who greeted him.

There was a wide stretch of sands on the southeastern shore where the Sujong-chon River joined the Taedong-gang. The Maekjon plain was green with wheat and barley.

The three men crossed the Sujong-chon and went along the cart road at the edge of the wheat and barley fields beside the river and the spur of Mt. Ponghwa-san.

As they went north, the green peak of the Ponghwa-san came in sight; it looked like a huge corn stack.

The wheat and barley harassed by frost and snow all winter grew fresh and green in the warm spring sun, looked especially fresh with the limpid waters of the Taedong-gang and the Sujong-chon in the background. The wheat and barley fields along the waterside and the sandy beach were a fruit of the local peasants' toil.

Like Mangyongdae, this area had no paddies, only meager patches of dry field. In the Maekjon plain they grew only wheat and barley because of the terrain. Flanked by the Taedong-gang and the Sujong-chon, the plain might flood in June and July, the rainy season, and the crops be spoiled. That was why they planted wheat and barley which could be harvested before the rains set in. They would be certain to have grain. So they only sowed these two crops. Hence the name Maekjon (Barley Field—*Tr.*) ferry, it was said.

Chong Jin Gu who had been walking ahead stopped short. With his long thin beard blowing in the breeze, he looked round

at Kim Hyong Jik, who also came to a halt.

"The village of Naedong is over there at the foot of that hill. It's a mountain village on the riverside," Chong Jin Gu said, pointing at Mt. Ponghwa-san.

"That's Mt. Ponghwa-san, you say?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, looking northward. "The hill is thickly wooded with pines, the rivers on both sides must be swarming with fish. So if there were rice paddies, I imagine it would be an ideal place to live."

Covered thickly with the pine trees, Mt. Ponghwa-san looked very high. A huge old pine stood imposingly at the crest making the peak look still higher.

The village of Naedong nestled in the southern valley hemmed in by two gently sloping foothills of Ponghwa-san, embracing it like the arms of a giant. But the giant's arms were just too short to reach right round the village; there was an opening to the southeast. The fields in front of the village were under wheat and barley.

The three people began to walk again.

"The village is very beautiful," said Kim Hyong Jik, walking at the heels of the old man.

"The landscape is nice, but the village is so out-of-the-way...", Chong Jin Gu replied vaguely. He was suddenly afraid that Kim Hyong Jik might not like this remote village. But Kim Hyong Jik showed no signs of this: he walked calmly on until they reached the village. Walking down the road lined with mulberry trees, they saw a clear well-spring on the right under an elevated field. The clear water welling out from a chasm of rocks was the overflow of the spring. Some way to the west of it at the bottom of the hill, there was a solitary slate-roofed four-room house.

It had been neglected and it looked deserted; the courtyard and surroundings were very untidy.

"Mr. Kim, this is the schoolhouse," said Cho Pil U, who followed close behind him.

Kim Hyong Jik looked the building area carefully and Chong Jin Gu felt ill at ease because of its state.

Kim Hyong Jik stepped onto the earthen bank under the eaves and looked into the room. There was a dirty mat spread on the classroom floor and three rows of long low desks. There were no chairs. When in class, the pupils used the mat to sit on.

"The school is well situated. And the yard is big enough," he said cheerfully, turning to the old Chong. Chong Jin Gu who had been looking nervous sighed with relief and replied: "Yes... indeed. Well, then, let us go to my place."

He got down off the earthen bank, and invited the new teacher to follow him, for it was already past the lunch time.

The three men had a belated lunch together in Chong Jin Gu's outhouse room. It had been arranged tidily for Kim Hyong Jik to live in. His host went out, wishing him a pleasant rest. Cho Pil U, too, rose, saying that as Sungsil School opened the day after tomorrow, he would be leaving in the morning. Kim Hyong Jik detained him, to ask how the school had been run and how things stood in the village. Then he gave Cho Pil U minute instructions on what he would have to do at Sungsil School. In particular, he told him how to build up students association at every school in the city, told him to get to know the leaders of the associations and, through them, unite all the students.

After Cho Pil U left, Kim Hyong Jik remained seated for a while and looked around the room. The walls were papered white and an elderly yellowish mat was spread on the floor. There was a low desk and a stationery chest made of red sandalwood in the corner. He noticed the warm hospitality of old Chong Jin Gu in these things.

Kim Hyong Jik was rather tired, but did not feel like sleep. He brought in his wicker trunk and bundle from the gate where they had been laid, and began to arrange his things. He arranged his books, writing brushes and ink neatly on the stationery chest and desk. For a while he sat by the desk, lost in thought. Then he stood up and went quietly outside. The sun was low in the west. The Chong Jin Gu's slate-roofed house was in the middle of the village. When he got to the entrance of the village, he had a view of the upper and lower sections of the village, some forty houses in all. At the lower end stood a large tile-roofed house; all the rest were shabby huts with low thatches that nearly touched the ground. He remembered the school building he had seen on his arrival. He thought about the tilting roof, the crumbling walls, the old, almost unusable blackboard and the pervasive musty smell and it made him sad. Almost without thinking, he began to walk to the school. There was a cool breeze at the edge of the village.

He got to the school grounds and stood there, gazing abstractedly at the bell which hung from the eaves, swaying in the breeze. Then he went into the classroom. The ceiling paper was spotted and the plaster on the walls was crumbling in places; apparently the roof leaked.

He went out and looked round the house. He paced out the frontage and depth of the schoolhouse, counted the number of rotten rafters, and, taking a notebook out of a waistcoat pocket, jotted it down.

The hill behind the school, a foothill of Mt. Ponghwa-san, was densely wooded with bare oak trees. The sun was sinking over the western ridge. He stepped towards it, climbing slowly up the hill along the path that ran through the trees. Soon the oaks gave way to huge pines, their trunks more than an arm's span round, with clusters of jujube trees here and there. Kim Hyong Jik walked ankle-deep in the springy layer of fallen leaves.

Half way up the hill there was a huge flat rock, surrounded by walls of pines. All was quiet and there was no breath of wind. Looking down from the middle of the flat rock, he could see the village of Naedong below him and with wheat and barley fields spreading before it. Far beyond was the Maekjon ferry, and the white ribbon of road winding through the Maekjon plain, to the market place of the township of Koup which straggled along it.

After a while he turned and went on to the top of the hill, where once there had been a beacon. One could see for miles around from there. To the northwest, there was a strip of water, the Taedong-gang, meandering through a hundred-*ri* plain, which stretched away up to Pyongyang; and to the back of Mt. Ponghwa-san was a chain of rugged mountain peaks that extended as far as Mt. Paegun-san in Songchon, which rose up into a sea of cloud. To the east was the steep mountain gorge leading to the township of Kangdong and beyond Mt. Adal-san towered gracefully to the sky. The winding road to Kangdong and Songchon vanished into this gorge. The scene awakened a flood of emotions in Kim Hyong Jik's breast.

How many years had passed since the days when this beacon was lit? Exposed to wind and rain for many years, the fire-place held no trace of ashes. In olden days, if foreign enemies crossed our frontiers or there were any other changes, a

warning fire would shoot up from one beacon after another on the countless mountain peaks, from the distant frontiers to every corner of the land. Whenever the beacon flames rose high into the sky from this mountain top, people would certainly have turned out raising war cries with spears or their hoes or rakes. Why is this beacon empty and deserted now?

An old proverb says there is no whole egg in an upturned nest and, as the country lay in ruins, everything was scattered and gone. The more he thought the more indignant he became.

He sat down on a large rock beside the beacon. There was a great old pine tree on the mountain top, stretching its luxuriant boughs up into the sky. The pine looked much bigger here than from down below. Surely it must be hundreds of years old. The imposing pine tree looked like a colossus rising up above the ages. As he looked up at the tree he suddenly felt with every fibre of his being the weight and challenge of the mission that had devolved on him. The new beacon must be lit up here on this Mt. Ponghwa-san, he thought. A tremendous fire so that the beacon could light up the whole country, that the whole world might see its furious flames soaring high into the sky. Twenty million Koreans should see the beacon and be encouraged to rise up in arms in a decisive battle for national liberation.

I will foster great will and energy, he thought, and strength as great as the huge pine tree, and step by step and without fail, carry out the great plan.

He controlled his excitement and turned his thoughts to the tasks that he would have to tackle now.

First of all, it was essential to build this village, Naedong, up into solid centre of activity. So, he would have to go among the masses, awaken and unite them. And the key to this lay in building up the village school.

He drew out his pocket book and put down in it a detailed plan for repairing the whole schoolhouse, for clearing the playground, for furniture and teaching aids, textbooks and writing materials.

As the evening drew in he made his way down the hill. Looking around the wood he noticed many big fallen pine trees. They will make good timbers, he thought.

After supper Kim Hyong Jik went into Chong Jin Gu's living room. He gave the old man all the details of his plan for repairing the school building. It should take some twenty days.

"You only arrived today and have not had time to rest after your journey, yet you have already worked out a plan...," said Chong Jin Gu, feeling his face flush as he listened to Kim Hyong Jik's scheme. "As the proprietor of the school, I really hardly dare show my face. I'm so ashamed to have invited you to teach in a school that is in such poor shape."

Kim Hyong Jik's plan would cost a fair sum of money, but Chong Jin Gu thought the outlay would be necessary to make the school worthy of its name. Should it cost all the money he had, he felt an urge to carry out his ambition, to give the village children education.

"Don't you say that," Kim Hyong Jik said. "You must have taken much trouble for the children of the village."

" 'A lot of noise but little wool,' I'm afraid. But now you've come to our village and worked out a detailed scheme for building up the school. Your plan has opened my eyes and encouraged me to get down to work. Tomorrow I'll go to the town and buy timber and take on carpenters. And would you please look after buying furniture and the rest? Don't count the cost.... So long as the school is put into proper shape, I'll find the money."

Chong Jin Gu looked invigorated. Listening to his confident declaration, Kim Hyong Jik smiled.

"I appreciate your kind proposal, sir," Kim Hyong Jik said. "But why should you bear the whole burden? Even if the matter is settled that way this time, surely you shouldn't do it all yourself in the future?"

"But there is no other way," said Chong Jin Gu, looking at Kim Hyong Jik doubtfully.

"All the people should pool their resources and discuss ways and means to build up and manage the school that will educate their children."

"That sounds all right, but I wonder, have they any resources to pool?" Chong Jin Gu said, still doubtful.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at Chong Jin Gu for a moment, and then asked him gently: "Sir, how many houses are there in and around the village of Naedong?"

This unexpected question baffled the old man, who hesitated a few moments and answered: "There are upward of forty houses in Naedong village... and scores in the villages of Sangbami and Chungbami. There must be more than a hundred in all."

"There, you see! If you can get them all to work together, they could run this school quite easily, couldn't they? They should pool their resources—those who have money should give money, those who have strength should give their strength and those who have little should contribute at least a log for a rafter. Then they could repair the schoolhouse and get furniture, teaching materials, and school supplies for the pupils without spending a lot, and run the school properly in the future, couldn't they?" Kim Hyong Jik explained. Chong Jin Gu was surprised at this profound, remarkable idea, which had been beyond his poor imagination.

"I'd never have thought of that. But all you say makes sense."

"If people put their heads and their resources together, I think they will think up still better ideas. I walked up the hill behind the village today and saw many fallen pines, they will probably be enough there for our needs."

"Oh, yes. There must be dead pine trees blighted by hairy caterpillars last spring. I never thought of them."

Kim Hyong Jik and Chong Jin Gu discussed ways of arousing the villagers to carry out their plan to repair the school. First they agreed that the next evening all the people in the three villages would be called together at the school, and that Kim Hyong Jik should speak and persuade them to lend a hand in repairing the school. To make the gathering a success, it was also decided that next morning the old man would go round the three villages and talk to the people who would be likely to take a lead in this work.

Chong Jin Gu was in high spirits now. He was as pleased as if the school had already been rebuilt and were ready for opening. And he looked back with deep emotion over the past few years when he had had so many headaches over school affairs.

However, listening to the old man Kim Hyong Jik thought that he would have to be ready for many snags before the school was ready and open, and he prepared his mind for it.

Just then, the landlord Pak Byong Tae came to see Chong Jin Gu. He was a lean man of medium stature, and looked somewhere around forty-five. He was dressed in silk with an expensive dark-blue woolen waistcoat over his Korean jacket with a gold watch chain dangling from the pocket. When the landlord appeared, Chong Jin Gu, who had been in high spirits,

became sullen and stiff.

Pak Byong Tae took a seat and, with a forced smile on his lean face he looked at Chong Jin Gu and Kim Hyong Jik in turn through his silver-framed glasses and said:

"When I got back from town, my wife told me that a new teacher had arrived in our village. So I came here as soon as I finished supper."

Chong Jin Gu tried hard to soften his expression, but he could not conceal his contempt. He forced himself to say, "Let me introduce Mr. Kim Hyong Jik to you."

"Ah, yes," said Pak Byong Tae politely, but not without an air of importance. "How do you do? I'm Pak Byong Tae. You must have had a hard journey."

Remembering what Cho Pil U had told about this man earlier that day Kim Hyong Jik was already prejudiced against the landlord. But he did not show it as they exchanged greetings.

Pak Byong Tae said:

"We are so grateful to learn that you have volunteered to come to this God-forsaken mountain village. In olden times, when they needed a teacher people would visit him three times and kotow before his house, begging him to teach them. Ha, ha, ha...."

He laughed heartily, thinking he had said just the right thing. His face was lean but sleek.

"I don't care a farthing what the people did in the old days," Chong Jin Gu retorted, without concealing his displeasure. "But we really are lucky that Mr. Kim has come to our village."

"Yes, of course," Pak Byong Tae began to talk about the importance of education and enlightenment. "To promote education and build a civilized society today is...."

Kim Hyong Jik listened to him in silence weighing him up the while. Cho Pil U had said that Pak Byong Tae had served as a minor official in the town of Kangdong in the last years of the Li dynasty. Then he was the first to have his hair cut and join the "Iljin-hoe". (A pro-Japanese organization—*Tr.*) He went to Pyongyang and took a short course in Japanese at an institute, and stayed in Pyongyang to serve the Japanese as an interpreter. Three years ago, he had come back to Kangdong as interpreter to the superintendent of surveyors sent to

the county by the "Bureau of Land Survey of the Government-General" making his fortune overnight. For he went out with the survey team, using his knowledge of the countryside to help the Japanese faithfully in robbing the Korean peasants of their land. He was rewarded for his services by an offer of scores of *chongbo* of the stolen land in the Koup sub-county for next to nothing. So he became a big landlord overnight. Almost all the land in Naedong, Sangbami, Chungbami and around the township fell into his hands. In the village of Naedong alone the woodlands and marshes which had belonged to the village as common land from the days of their forefathers, now belonged to Pak Byong Tae. The peasants were reduced to tenants who had to serve him for their living. Pak Byong Tae built a big mansion with more than twenty rooms in a beauty spot at the lower end of the village at the foot of Mt. Ponghwa-san and lived like a noble landlord. The soil of his estate increased from day to day. These days he frequented the township of Kangdong and the city of Pyongyang. Rumour had it that he was intriguing for the post of administrative head of Koup sub-county. Having started his career as a minor official, he amassed fortune through many sinful acts. So, rich though he was, he was held in contempt by influential people and by the ordinary county folk. In property, Chong Jin Gu was no match for Pak Byong Tae. But he was decent and respected by people far and wide in this area, so Pak Byong Tae could not be insolent to him.

"...and so I'm now working to build a public primary school in the seat of the sub-county office," Pak Byong Tae went on. "Again today I've been to the township to negotiate with the authorities about the matter, but things are not going too well. Tomorrow I'll go to Pyongyang, I'll have to approach the provincial authorities and get them to do something. Fortunately, just at this moment you have come to us, and I'm very happy to meet you as a person of like mind. I hope you'll first build up our village school. And if you run up into any problems...."

Pak Byong Tae stopped talking and took a quick side-ways look at Chong Jin Gu.

Chong Jin Gu sat puffing away at his pipe, keeping his face turned away. For a second Pak Byong Tae frowned but then he brightened with a generous air; he turned to Kim Hyong Jik and said:

"I'm sure that Old Chong will spare nothing in helping you, but don't hesitate to ask me for anything you need. I'm quite willing to back you up."

"Thank you" was Kim Hyong Jik's brief reply.

After Pak took his leave, several villagers came to pay their respects to Kim Hyong Jik and had a chat with him. Among them was the peasant called Chun Bo who had sailed the boat down to Mangyongdae that day to bring him here.

2

The earliest riser in the village of Naedong was Pak Byong Tae's fourteen-year-old servant, Duk Bu. He had to go up Mt. Ponghwa-san early every morning to collect firewood. He was not allowed to have breakfast until he returned with a load. So he would get up before daylight and climb up the hill, an A-frame carrier on his back.

Still young, he was a heavy sleeper. Moreover, it was spring now. The moment he lay down among the grown-ups in the servants' quarters after a long day's heavy work, he would be fast asleep. He had overslept the day before, and had run up the mountain as fast as his legs would carry him. But when he came back with a load of firewood, he got no breakfast for it was past breakfast time. So this morning he was up with the dawn and out with the carrier on his back. He was reeling with sleep, but the cool morning air soon had him wide awake. He climbed the hill path in a cheerful mood. The morning star was twinkling in the grey-blue sky above the mountain top and a gentle breeze blew through the luxuriant pines. Soon, Duk Bu came to the huge flat rock halfway up the hill. He put his A-frame down, leaning it on a stick, and took his sharp sickle. Then he turned round and looked out on the scenery below. A milky mist was flowing over the hills and fields which had wakened from their sweet slumber of the spring night. The mist rose like a white cloud from the meandering Taedong-gang far away in the Maekjon plain, and spread over the green velvet of the wheat and barley fields. Another long streak of mist came creeping along the ridge up the breast of Mt. Pong-

hwa-san.

"Oh, how nice!" Duk Bu muttered to himself. A blissful smile played about his lips. He was very fond of nature. There was no one in this world who loved Duk Bu, and Duk Bu himself had no one and nothing to love except Mt. Ponghwa-san and its surroundings.

A drizzly summer day seemed to weep for his sorrow, the bleak evening sky of a winter's day aglow with the sunset to reflect his loneliness over the horizon. The howling thunder storms gave vent to his anger, and the quietly flowing Taedong-gang—he knew not where or whence—symbolized his childish desire to go far away somewhere.

For a while the boy stood gazing at the misty landscape. Then, remembering his task, he walked off into the wood. Skilfully he cut cluster after cluster of bush clover. He tied up two bundles and was cutting to make up a third, when he heard a strange sound—"bang".

It reverberated and then echoed back from the peak of Ponghwa-san. Another "bang" came to meet the echo.... Someone was felling a tree. The sound of an axe came from the opposite gully down below. In wide-eyed surprise Duk Bu studied the gully which was still in semi-darkness. A gauzy mist made it difficult to discern who was cutting trees. The sounds of the axe became more insistent. A flock of startled birds roused from their slumbers in the wood flew up into the still dark sky of early dawn.

Presently, the boy who had been staring into the gully began to climb down furtively.

A stranger stripped down to the shirt was cutting down a pine tree more than an arm's span around.

Every time the axe went down and its sharp edge bit into the tree trunk, chips of wood as wide as a man's palm flew in all directions. The treetops soaring high into the morning sky shuddered and dry pine needles fell on the woodman's head.

"Quite good!" Duk Bu mumbled to himself. "But who could he be?... I've never seen him in our village...."

The boy tried hard to work out who the man might be, but he was a complete stranger. After some hesitation he took a few steps towards the man. Under successive strokes of the axe the tree was now ready to fall. A few more blows at the other side and then a push, and the tree will fall, thought Duk Bu. Secretly worried, Duk Bu watched the tree, when,

sure enough, the man stopped chopping and examined the base of the tree. Then he wielded the axe and hit at the opposite side of the trunk several times, ran a quick eye from top to bottom and then put his sturdy shoulder to the trunk and pushed vigorously. Each time he gave it a shove, the tree nodded towards its fall. Without thinking, Duk Bu ran forward, put his hands on the tree trunk below the man's shoulder and pushed with him. The big pine tree fell down with a crash. Duk Bu lost his balance and was falling forward with the tree, when a strong hand caught him by the shoulder. Looking round, Duk Bu saw the stranger.

"Thank you for helping," said the man, looking at him with a bright smile, his face flushed and his forehead dripping wet with sweat. Duk Bu did not know what to answer. He had just helped the man on the spur of the moment without knowing who he was. So, raising his dirty face—he had not washed yet—he looked up blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha! What's the matter? Because I'm a stranger? Well, well, let's sit down here and take a little rest," said the man, approaching the pine which had been felled just now, and seated himself on it.

"Come, sit down," the man beckoned him kindly.

Duk Bu stepped towards him hesitantly. The stranger drew out a cotton towel from his side and wiped the sweat off his face, asking, "Do you live in this village?"

"Yes, sir."

"What brings you to the mountain so early?"

Duk Bu hesitated, for he did not know why the man was asking, nor did he know what to answer. But somehow he took a liking to the man and could not resist saying, "I've come to gather firewood...."

"To gather firewood?" the stranger looked surprised. "Before daylight?... Maybe you ran out of firewood this morning?"

"No, sir."

"Then why are you here?" said the man, looking inquiringly at Duk Bu. But the boy was silent. He had no one to turn to for sympathy, nor did he want any. He hated to tell others about his miserable life.

"You have no grown-ups in your home then, maybe?" the man asked gently. He watched the boy with tender worried eyes.

"No, it's not that, sir," answered Duk Bu quietly, avoiding the eyes which seemed to go right to his heart.

"Tell me why. If you have elders and there is firewood in your home, why should you, a young boy, come out to gather firewood before daylight?"

His kind words warmed up the boy's heart. Duk Bu mumbled out: "They don't give me any breakfast if I don't bring in firewood...."

"Give you no breakfast?!" the stranger was stunned. "Who is your father?"

"I haven't got a father."

"And your mother?"

"I haven't got a mother either."

"Then, you are...," the man's voice trembled and he could not finish the sentence. At this, a lump came into Duk Bu's throat.

"I'm a servant at the landlord Pak's," the boy said. "They tell me I should be grateful because they picked me up when I was a stray and have brought me up."

The stranger rose from his seat and held the young servant's thin shoulders tightly with his hands. Then he looked silently in the boy's pale, wizened dirty face which looked old for his age. Duk Bu felt warmth flowing through his whole body from those hands on his shoulders. He averted his eyes.

"What is your name?" asked the man.

"Duk Bu, sir," the boy murmured, turning away his face.

"Family name?"

"I haven't got one. I'm just called Duk Bu."

Again the man gazed at the boy in silence. Then, he said in a rather unsteady voice: "Duk Bu, poor creature! You are still young but you seem to be having a very hard time."

The poor boy was nearly crying but he set his teeth and held back his tears. Where could he be from, the boy wondered. The man looked at the far end of the grove, his hands still resting on the boy's shoulders. He looked lost in thought. Who could he be that is so nice to me? Duk Bu thought the man odd because he was used to being treated like a roadside pebble.

"Who...are you, uncle?" asked Duk Bu at last, unable to stay silent.

Turning to look at the boy, the stranger answered:

"Me? Oh, I should introduce myself. I am the school tea-

cher; I moved into Naedong yesterday."

"Oh, you're the school teacher!" said the boy, looking straight up at the man. Yesterday the children talked about a new teacher coming to the village, so this must be him, he thought.

"And why are you cutting trees?" asked the boy. "Haven't you got any firewood? I'll tell you what, I'll make the time and get you a load of firewood for you later."

"Thank you. But I am not felling trees for firewood. I am going to repair the school."

"Really?" Duk Bu gave an involuntary shout of joy. "Are you going to make the school all nice?" The boy's large eyes twinkled with delight.

"Yes," answered Kim Hyong Jik, smiling warmly.

"And all the children in the village are coming to study?"

"Yes...." Duk Bu was silent and looked crestfallen. However well the school might be rebuilt for all the other children, it would not affect him. The teacher had been going to say something but seeing the boy's face, he held his peace.

"Teacher, I must go now," Duk Bu started worried that he might miss his breakfast again this morning. Stepping back from the teacher, he bowed and turned round.

"All right, go," the teacher said. "And come and see me when you can."

"Yes, sir," said Duk Bu, smiling at the kind teacher. Then he ran up the hill. Behind him he again heard the axe at work. The man looked kind-hearted yet strange, he thought. A new schoolmaster, to come out before sunrise to cut trees for repairing the school house! What could that mean?

Chong Jin Gu rose from his bed and quietly went outside. He thought that Kim Hyong Jik must be very tired because he had had not time to rest after the fatigue of his journey and, moreover, he had sat up till late the previous night. "I must let him sleep this morning," thought he, going down to the yard very quietly. He stopped in front of the outhouse room for a moment and strained his ears. There was not a sound inside. Assured that the teacher was still asleep, the old man turned round when his eyes lit on the step stone before the verandah. He could not see the teacher's shoes. He looked about the place over again, but there were no shoes. He asked his wife, who was in the kitchen cooking the breakfast, but she said she had not

heard the teacher go out.

"He must be very tired, and yet...," Chong Jin Gu said to himself. "What an early riser...."

Chong Jin Gu thought that the teacher must have gone out for a stroll, and went out of the gate. He had planned to go to a few houses before breakfast and discuss school matters. He took a short cut through between the barley fields, to begin by talking to An Sin Do, an old woman who lived decently on a few patches of land she owned. Then, he would go to Choe Sok Man, nicknamed Choe the Glib and Ho Gi Son, both of whom were usually willing to take on any job that concerned the common weal of the village. As he walked along wondering how to explain it all to these people, Chong Jin Gu heard the sound of an axe from the direction of Mt. Ponghwa-san. He looked suspiciously at the mountain. Who would be felling trees in the grove at such an early hour? He thought hard, but could not think who it might be. You can get any amount of firewood in the copse without wasting energy like that, he thought. So why would anyone want to fell a tree?

When the old man went round the corner of Chun Bo's house, he saw five or six villagers standing on the road talking among themselves. They greeted him.

"Good morning. Who is that felling trees in the grove?" asked Chong Jin Gu straight away.

"Well, that's what we've been wondering," answered Chun Bo, who had escorted Kim Hyong Jik from Mangyongdae, looking up at the mountain.

"Ah, here comes Duk Bu. Come here, Duk Bu," Choe the Glib called out. Duk Bu was coming down with a heavy load of firewood on his back. When he was called, the boy stopped.

"Did you see who that is felling trees up there in the wood?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, who is it?"

At Old Chong Jin Gu's abrupt question the boy looked round at the grown-ups and answered:

"The new schoolmaster who arrived yesterday. He said he was cutting timber to rebuild the school."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Rebuild the school?"

The people stirred. Chong Jin Gu stood looking at the Ponghwa-san, hearing the distant echoes of the axe. Suddenly he

gave a start and called the others: "Look, let's go and see. Come quick." The old man took a hasty step or two.

"Uncle, what is all this?" asked Choe Sok Man, standing in his way.

"Oh, I'll tell you the whole story later. But the upshot of it is this, Mr. Kim who came yesterday was kind enough to work out a plan to rebuild the school. He suggested that the dead pines on the mountain could be cut for the timber. And there he is out cutting them at this hour."

"Is that true?"

The villagers were round-eyed.

"Let's hurry up!" said Chong Jin Gu, breaking into a half run, at the head.

"Let's."

"What's the use of going empty-handed? We should take some tools."

"Yes, that's right."

And they all ran off home to fetch saws, sickles or axes. Then they hurried up the mountain behind the old man, with other men and children who heard them following behind.

Kim Hyong Jik had just felled another pine tree when he saw people coming up the gully. He looked down quizzically at them. Chong Jin Gu who came running up with his long beard bending to the wind halted beside him and said, panting: "Why, Mr. Kim! Why are you here? This is the job we ought to look after ourselves."

The other men stood guiltily by the old man.

"Why have you all come up?" said Kim Hyong Jik. "I just came up to cut down a couple of trees and stretch my limbs before breakfast. Now I'll go back; let's all go down."

He laughed light-heartedly.

As if on behalf of the villagers Chun Bo who was already an acquaintance of him said apologetically:

"But you should have rested after your long journey.... We're sorry we let the village school fall into disrepair, sir."

"No, don't apologize.... Oh, yes, I have not yet met you people. I'm glad to make your acquaintance," said Kim Hyong Jik politely, making a slight bow.

Now, Old Chong Jin Gu came forward, saying, "Let me introduce you to Mr. Kim Hyong Jik who came to our school yesterday. Salute him, you all."

The simple country folk bowed to him, presenting their compliments:

"My name is Nam Chol Dol. You've taken so much trouble to come all the way here. How do you do?"

"My name is Ho Gi Son."

Kim Hyong Jik pressed their large gnarled hands one by one. They were the same as the hands of his parents, his brothers and the people in his native village. The last to come forward to meet him was a stocky man who looked a little over thirty.

"My name is Choe Sok Man," he introduced himself in a thin voice out of keeping with his stocky body. "But most people in this village do not know my real name, they all call me Choe the Glib, shameless as they are."

"An impossible man you are.... Is that the way to salute the teacher?"

"Now he calls himself Choe the Glib, ha, ha, ha...."

"Ha, ha, ha...." everyone burst out laughing.

So did Kim Hyong Jik. He felt light-hearted and gay. They were nice, simple, easygoing people. He was glad that from now on he would work and live among them.

"You make fun of me, calling me the Glib," cried Choe, glancing round at the villagers. "But let me have my say. Since we are up here, what do you say to our putting in a short spurt to cut timber?"

"That's a good idea."

"The Glib is talking sense for once."

"Ha, ha, ha...." There was another burst of laughter. The villagers scattered into the copse in search of dead trees. The whole mountain resounded with the noise of saws and axes. The lonely mountain seemed to have suddenly risen up with an outcry. Kim Hyong Jik, too, took up his axe and went up to a pine tree that stood just in front of them.

Now a rosy morning glow appeared over the peak of Mt. Adal-san beyond the distant Kangdong valley. "Yo-ho, yo-ho, yo-heave-ho". In twos and threes the villagers carried the logs down to the village. Soon there was a big pile of tree-trunks in the school grounds. Women who had been cooking breakfast and the old folk came out to have a look. The men who had brought down the timber squatted in the grounds, wiping their sweat, and lighting their pipes. Already the villagers were familiar with Kim Hyong Jik, treating him like an old friend. They were well satisfied when they looked at the pile of timber.

Chun Bo who was sitting across from Kim Hyong Jik scratched his head rather shamefacedly and said:

"I'm sorry, sir. If we had worked as hard as we did this morning for a just few days, we could have repaired the school long since. We never thought of it even though we passed the school every morning and evening; we just sighed every time we noticed the tilting roof."

"You're right!" Choe Sok Man, who had been squatting beside Chun Bo, rose to his feet, looked round at the people and chimed in. "Look, men. One thing I've got to say. We may be unlettered country folk, but how could we be so shameless as to leave the job of rebuilding the school to the teacher? They say that even a weasel has a face to show. We are not yet busy on the farms, so why not put in a few days now to repair the school?"

There was a hubbub of voices: "A very good idea", "The Glib is talking sense this morning every time he opens his mouth." "If the whole village takes the job in hand, it'll all be done in a few days."

Just then an elderly peasant sitting in the opposite corner, who had been silently puffing away at his pipe, muttered as if to himself: "It's good idea, but I don't think we can manage by ourselves...."

"Couldn't manage it and why not, indeed?" a young man sitting near him retorted. The villagers who had been murmuring noisily turned to look at the elderly man, who calmly added:

"There's got to be a carpenter on the job, or do we want to make a bodge-up?"

No one argued now. Some of the villagers even nodded in agreement. The place was silent for a while.

"Oh my! Is that such a big problem for you menfolk? Well then, I'll see to the carpenter business," cried an old woman standing in the group of women huddled on the far side of the pile of logs. She was the widow An Sin Do.

The elderly man looked up and said contemptuously, "Humph, do you even know what the middle crosspiece is on a wall, auntie?"

"Is it that important then, your middle crosspiece?" The widow snapped back. "I'll bring my nephew here; he is a carpenter in the town. The teacher comes to this God-forsaken village of ours to teach our children and go out, axe in hand, to

rebuild our school, and you menfolk, you who call yourselves masters of the village, all that you can do is sit and sigh. Is that a way to behave?"

"Auntie is sensible as always," cried out Choe the Glib triumphantly. "Let's all pull our weight and get it done."

"As for carpentry, I think I, too, can give some help...." Ho Gi Son spoke haltingly but with a good-natured smile, raising his shy simple face. He addressed no one in particular. He had been squatting beside Kim Hyong Jik, looking on in silence.

"Oh, yes, you've some experience in building houses," said Choe the Glib, delighted. "But why so shy? You ought to have spoken at the start."

Now that even Ho Gi Son had come forward, the villagers' spirits rose again, and they all agreed to work together on it as Choe Sok Man had suggested.

At this moment Chun Bo slowly approached Kim Hyong Jik and said in an earnest tone:

"We are sorry, sir. Now please leave the whole job to us, and don't worry about it any more. We are very grateful to you for bringing us thickheaded people to our senses."

"Don't talk like that," said Kim Hyong Jik, his heart full. With a fresh wave of affection he looked at Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man, Ho Gi Son, Aunt An Sin Do and all the others. How good they were! Suddenly he recalled the argument he had had with Song Se Ho sometime before. He still remembered Song's voice claiming that there was nothing to expect from the masses who were backward, ignorant and helpless. But these villagers, poor, uneducated peasants in a remote mountain village now before him were so pure, and full of strength and confidence. It reaffirmed his belief in the wisdom and strength of the masses. He had been right to assert it. For all you have to do is to awaken, unite and guide them, he thought. Even in this troublesome society where evil and injustice have the upper hand with truth and justice trampled underfoot, truth and justice are alive in the hearts and blood of the masses; here lie the strength, the will and wisdom to defend them.

"Thank you. For it is I who should thank you," said Kim Hyong Jik sincerely, bowing to the villagers.

"Oh no, sir," Aunt An Sin Do protested. "Don't say that. Please make our children into worthy men and women."

"I'll do my best," answered the teacher. His reply held profound meaning and firm resolve.

That evening many peasants from Chungbami and Sangbami, to say nothing of Naedong, flocked to the school. The schoolroom was too small to seat them all. So they spread mats on the ground and sat on them.

Kim Hyong Jik spoke convincingly about the need for the poor people to educate their children to be fine people, and emphasized that if they all got together, they could build up and run the school.

The villagers agreed unanimously and by the end of the meeting a detailed plan had been approved to build a new school.

3

Standing astride of a long and very thick log, Ho Gi Son was wielding a big adze. He was making the main beam of the roof. The old leaning schoolhouse had vanished and massive posts were erected in its place. Many people were bustling about putting the upper crosspieces into place between the posts. When this was done, the mainbeam could be lifted, perhaps even that day.

Ho Gi Son's broad forehead shone with sweat. Whenever the pale edge of the adze bit into the log, a palm-wide chip of wood peeled off. There was a strong tang of pine resin in the air. Ho Gi Son stopped and walked leisurely to an end of the log, where he closed one eye and looked along the timber to check. It was in true. Some good trimming, and it would do nicely.

Behind him people shouted noisily: "A bit higher, come on! A bit more effort there!" "Heave-ho!" Ho Gi Son rose and turned back. Old An Sin Do's tall nephew, the carpenter from Kangdong, stood a little way off waving his hand, and giving commands to raise or lower the crossbeam. Some five or six men, Kim Hyong Jik among them, were up aloft with a large timber on their shoulders, moving it this way and that to get it placed exactly where he wanted it.

"Dear me! When did the teacher come out here?" Ho Gi Son muttered to himself. At dawn the previous day Kim Hyong Jik had left the Maekjon ferry for Pyongyang with a few boys. He had come back quite late at night with paper and school things from the city. And Ho Gi Son's wife who had come back from the well early in the morning had told him that the teacher's window in Chong Jin Gu's house had still been lit up then. And here he was, out on the building site. Ho Gi Son wondered if the teacher had slept at all.

In the early dawn on the day after his arrival at Naedong he had aroused the sleeping village with the loud sounds of his axe, and ever since the window of his room had been alight at all hours of night and he had never absented himself from the building site while work was in progress.

In the daytime he directed the building work on the spot; at night he prepared the textbooks for the children till cock-crow. And still he showed no signs of fatigue. He was even brimming with energy and vitality, always cheerful and optimistic. Now the village was alive and happy. The villagers would say: "Fortune has begun to smile on our village of Naedong."

"Drop it!" shouted the carpenter from Kangdong who was directing the lifting of the upper crosspiece, and he matched his words by bringing down his upraised arm.

The crosspiece settled on the posts with a thump. The carpenter raced forward, taking a long nail out of the bag hanging at his side. He placed it on the post and drove it in with the back of his hatchet. With the middle crosspieces in place, the structure began to look like a house. It looked much bigger than the former schoolhouse, and much higher. In a few days the roof rafters would be on, the smaller sticks fastened across them, the walls plastered and the roof tiled. Then it would be complete. Ho Gi Son could see the completed schoolhouse with its tile roof, and how every morning the bell would ring, its clear sound reverberating through the village, and children carrying bundles of books coming out of the lanes singing. Soon their clear voices reading books would flow out of the schoolroom with its freshly papered windows.

As he had stood there absent-mindedly picturing the scene, Ho Gi Son in spite of himself heaved a sigh. Working on the new school, he sometimes pictured to himself the day when the school would open. And after, when it was all finished he

would surely feel sad and empty.

The school was being built nicely, but he had no son to send there. Of course, he had a daughter, his only child. Sun Hui was the apple of his eye. But she was a daughter, not a son. A daughter was worthless in this world. His only daughter was lovely and dear to him, but sending her to school was out of the question. If he sent his daughter to school, he would surely be the laughing-stock of the village. His was a cruel lot. Half his life he had worked like a beast of burden at a nobleman's house, and then had married late. The marriage brought him one child, a girl. So he had no one to carry on his family line.

The more he thought, the more oppressed he felt. He sighed a long, deep sigh. He was just a humble nobody, so what was the good of keeping his family line going? Was it ever worth doing so in this unworthy world? And as always, Ho Gi Son had given up all hopes.

He worked on with his big adze. There was nothing in the world like work. Even when he was out of sorts, unbearably sad and lonely, he could forget his troubles once he took up work and applied himself really hard. Ho Gi Son trimmed the timber for the main beam with all his might. When it was halfway done, he heard vigorous singing from afar. He looked up. It came from the valley below Mt. Ponghwa-san. The voices came nearer and nearer.

The winds arise and roar and rage
As shapeless, colourless air masses meet.

It was the song Kim Hyong Jik had taught the children who had come to lend a hand two days before, and next day, they were singing it all day long wherever they went. Their song resounded throughout the village. Sun Hui, too, had been humming it last night.

A column of village children appeared from the gully of Mt. Ponghwa-san, a long string of youngsters carrying bulky loads on their backs. Their singing voices rang out across the village.

The youth arise to start along
A rough and thorny path.

It was a stirring song. Ho Gi Son grinned as he involuntarily beat time with his head. If I was that young, how wonderful it would be! he thought.

The youngsters reached the school grounds and thudded down their loads. They were bundles of bush-clover rods for sticks to run across between the rafters.

"Well look at that," gasped Ho Gi Son, pop-eyed, for in the last group of youngsters he saw his daughter, Sun Hui. She wore a cotton jacket and trousers like a boy. Ho Gi Son had brought up Sun Hui to wear boy's clothes from her early years. He and his wife had so wanted a boy that they brought up their daughter like one. It was an expression of their desire to see their beloved only daughter grow up healthy and strong like a boy. Perhaps that was why his daughter, though poorly clad and poorly fed, had grown up healthy, never ill. And since this spring the girl, now twelve years old, had become very pretty, her face blossoming brightly. Boy's clothes no longer suited her, and Ho Gi Son thought it was improper for her to wear boy's clothes now.

"Oh, thank you, young ones," praised Kim Hyong Jik and approached the youngsters. Then, taking down the bundle of bush-clover rods from the back of the widow An Sin Do's grandson who looked the shortest and youngest, he exclaimed:

"Dear me! Did you go, too, Gyong Ho? Why, you've brought such a big bundle...."

"It wasn't heavy, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha. You are quite strong, eh? Well, I thank you all. Take a rest," said Kim Hyong Jik with a kindly smile, addressing the children who stood surrounding him.

"Sir, we are going for one more lot," Yong Chun, a youth of about sixteen, came forward and looked at the teacher rather seriously. He was a son of Choe Sok Man and a leader among the youngsters. He was a sober lad, unlike his father, Choe the Glib.

"No, take a rest. We grown-ups are also going to have a break. Let's all sit down and take a breather," said Kim Hyong Jik, sitting down on the bundle of bush-clover rods that lay beside him. But the children would not sit, and they looked hesitantly at him.

"Sir, will you tell us an interesting story today, too?" Gyong Ho who was standing close to the teacher asked abruptly. As if this was a signal, all the children closed in and shouted:

"Please tell us another story, please do, sir."

The teacher looked round at the children with a smile and said: "Of course I will if you want one. Come here and sit down all of you."

"Hurrah!"

The youngsters jostled with one another for better seats and sat down close around the teacher. A few of the more sensible older ones stood back, Sun Hui among them. A boy asked abruptly:

"Sir, what does it mean, 'It takes the meeting of a thousand rivers to make Pacific and Atlantic Oceans'?"

"Sir, we tried to find out the meaning on the mountain, but we couldn't."

"Teacher, tell us what it means."

"Gap Dol said that the Pacific was an old name of Pyongyang and that the Atlantic was the name of a man. Is that right?"

"You there! I didn't say, it was. I only said it might be," protested Gap Dol who was standing in the back, blushing deep red. He looked fourteen or so. He was So Chun Bo's son.

"Ha, ha, ha.... Oh, I taught you the song, but I didn't tell what it meant," said Kim Hyong Jik laughing heartily, looking into the black shining eyes of the children who wanted to know everything in the world.

"Why, those urchins are pestering the teacher; he hardly had a wink of sleep last night, and now he can't even rest during the break. They should ask their questions later," muttered Ho Gi Son to himself, though he himself was by no means uninterested.

"The Pacific and the Atlantic are the names of oceans," the teacher replied.

"Oceans? Well, but what do the oceans look like?" asked the children, nestling up still closer to the teacher.

"This earth we live on is so big and wide that it is beyond your imagination. Have you ever climbed to the top of Mt. Ponghwa-san over there and looked out on the fields stretching far away?"

"Yes, sir," all the children answered together.

"And what did you see?"

A tiny tot stood up briskly and answered: "I saw the fields and the Taedong-gang, mountains and Pyongyang."

"Oh yes. You are smart. And did you see the end of the

earth?"

To this question the children answered unanimously and confidently: "No, we didn't."

"You are right. You cannot see the end of the earth. The earth on which we build houses to live in, fathers and mothers raise crops, and you romp about, is so wide that we cannot see its end with our own eyes, however high we climb. But if we get on a boat at the Maekjon ferry and sail some 200 *ri* down the river past Pyongyang and Ryonggang, the land comes to an end and a boundless sea appears before our eyes. The sea has no mountains or fields. Everywhere waves roll just as you see on the Taedong-gang. The sea is so vast that we cannot reach its end even by sailing for ten days or twenty days, and so deep that we cannot reach its bottom even by diving hundreds of fathoms under the water. Our people call it West Sea, and it swarms with fish. Giltheads, hairtails and the like are caught by fishermen who live by the sea."

"Oh, how I wish I could go and have a look at it!" someone cried.

"You can go when you are old enough. Our country faces the sea not only in the west, it has wide seas in the east and the south as well. The Pacific and Atlantic in our song are the largest of all seas on the earth. They are so wide that you must sail tens of thousands of miles across them before you come to the other shore."

"Oh my...," exclaimed the children in wide-eyed surprise.

"How come there is so much water in the sea?" mumbled Sun Hui who was standing shyly in the back row. It was not clear whether she was asking a question or just expressing her wonder.

"Why, the hussy is asking a silly question. It has much water because it is a sea," said Ho Gi Son to himself, darting a reproachful glance at his daughter.

With tender, smiling eyes Kim Hyong Jik looked round at the round-eyed children and the inquisitive Sun Hui and, then at the villagers, now seated on the earthen bank of the school, listening intently.

"Indeed, the waters of the Pacific are as unbounded as the song says," he said. "And there are mountains under the waters higher than the highest mountain on earth and the bottom of the sea is wider than the largest continent. And where does the boundless ocean come from? As the song says,

little mountain streams have met to make it. In other words, the numberless little streams flowing down the ravines like that of the Sangbami gully join and make a large river like the Taedong-gang and an untold number of such large rivers join together to form an ocean. So, in a nutshell, even a great ocean like the Pacific starts with drops of water. What do you say? Is it clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's clear, sir."

The children answered with their eyes sparkling. Ho Gi Son and other grown-ups, too, nodded their heads.

"Now, let's go on to the next lines of the song." Kim Hyong Jik kindly explained the meaning of the song to the children in plain language. He said that just as waterdrops join to form streams which flow into rivers and the rivers fall into seas, so men can grow up into reliable pillars of society, into useful people only after hardening their bodies and minds in face of all difficulties. So the rising generation should bravely cut their way through hardships, he emphasized.

After he had explained the meaning of the song to the children, he suggested: "Let's all sing the song." The youngsters sang vigorously:

....
And if we join up all our hard endeavours,
Our fund of knowledge will increase.
The young arise to start along
A rough and thorny path
....

Ho Gi Son was moved by the children's singing. The song had a deep meaning and it impressed him greatly. Every word Kim Hyong Jik uttered had a profound meaning and expressed his true heart. Ho Gi Son envied the children. His heart was filled with a desire. If only I was as young as those children, I would study hard under the good teacher and then live a worthy life as a respectable man, he thought. But then his eye fell on his daughter who was singing with the boys, hiding herself behind them, perhaps to avoid her father's eye, and he realized the absurdity of his daydream. He smiled a wry smile and sighed deeply, thinking to himself: "How good it would be if the child were a son!"

The song was over.

Suddenly Yong Chun asked: "Sir, how many days will it take to finish the school?"

"Ten days."

"Teacher, when the school is opened, will you teach us good songs and tell us many stories and then explain us things such as the Pacific and the Atlantic?"

"Yes, yes. Of course I will. I'll teach you Korean so that you may read thick books freely, and history which will show you how our forefathers lived for thousands of years in the past. You will also learn about how our country came into being, about its plains, mountains, rivers, seas, villages and towns, about the principles of the universe—how the sun rises, why the moon shines, what the rain and wind are."

He did not look tired of answering the questions asked by the inquisitive children.

"Hurrah!"

"How nice!"

The youngsters gave shouts of joy in chorus.

At this moment, from the back row, someone called out, "Now, lads" and came forward. It was Yong Chun. "Let's go and fetch another bundle of bush clover each."

At the call the children raised a cheerful shout and hurried off towards the mountain.

Looking after the youngsters as they went away, the teacher said to himself: "Fine little chaps they are."

4

When he finished his supper Kim Hyong Jik who had worked all day long at the building site of the school felt a bit weary. But he went outside and strolled about the yard for sometime. Then he returned to the room and sat at the desk. He began to cut a stencil paper with a stylus. He was going to duplicate schoolbooks, and he would have to hurry because the school opening was just around the corner.

The night was far advanced when Chong Jin Gu knocked at his door. He entered and produced the register of pupils.

As he went out, he complained that he had a big headache because the villagers were still strongly influenced by feudalism. For several days he had been busily canvassing round the villages of Naedong, Sangbami and Chungbami for the registration of children.

Kim Hyong Jik finished cutting the stencil paper in hand and put down the stylus. Then he took up and leafed through the notebook brought in by the old man.

A brief glance over the roster told him that quite a few children in Naedong and Sangbami were missing. First of all, the children of Ho Gi Son and some others in Naedong, including Komannyo, whom he knew well were not registered.

With the register in his hand, he sat brooding. Why don't they enrol? Apparently Komannyo's parents have refused to enter her because she is a girl. But what's the matter with Ho Gi Son? He comes to the reconstruction site every day and works hard. The previous morning, as he walked past his house, Kim Hyong Jik saw a lad of about twelve, as handsome as a girl, playing in the yard. He remembered the boy greeting him with a blush. Today the boy had been to the mountain with his friends and carried bundles of bush clover on his back, hadn't he? Why should his father refuse to enter him? Because of the school expenses? Or is his family short of work hands? Kim Hyong Jik wondered. He was worried about Ho Gi Son's family and about the others who had not entered their children.

Taking up the register, he jumped to his feet and went out into the yard. The window of the main living room was dark. He turned round and went out of the gate.

He looked meditatively at the village which was wrapped in darkness. There was a light in the blind window of the low straw-thatched house next to the well yonder. It was Ho Gi Son's. Kim Hyong Jik stood gazing at the light for a while and then walked resolutely towards it.

Meanwhile Ho Gi Son had been depressed and felt ill at ease all day.

The previous evening when Chong Jin Gu had come and asked for the enrolment of Sun Hui, he had not answered, he had just sat and sighed. Now he was not sure whether he had acted wisely or not.

And he was deeply moved by what he had seen in the daytime. The children gathered around the teacher learning

songs and finding out about the world. They had also been told about what they would study at school. Now, Ho Gi Son could not forget the expression on his daughter's face, as she stood shyly behind the other children, gazing intently at the teacher. Should I go and discuss the matter with the teacher even now? He was agitated. But the next moment he heaved a sigh of resignation, thinking that a man of his social status was not entitled to give an education to his daughter.

In the daytime he had been so engrossed in woolgathering that he had made more than one miscut with the large adze.

He was nervous when he returned home. He sat at table set by his wife. His wife was not a talkative woman. But it was unusual that she should wait at table without uttering a single word. She only cast an occasional sideways glance, studying his face. Sun Hui was not at home. Somehow the atmosphere was uncomfortable and made him uneasy. Or was it just fancy? As he finished his meal, his wife brought him a bowl of water. Laying it before him, she said abruptly:

"By the way, there's something I would like to talk over with you."

Ho Gi Son looked at his wife, bowl in hand. Her face was grave.

"What's that?" asked the husband, confused.

"Let's send Sun Hui to school. The teacher said girls would be accepted. That's what I was told."

Ho Gi Son remained silent, staring vacantly into his wife's imploring eyes. Putting the bowl limply down on the table, he breathed a long sigh.

"Did Sun Hui say so?"

"Yes. I'm afraid she'll fall sick if we don't send her."

The husband heaved another long sigh before he said:

"I'd like to do so too, but just think. What use is it to give schooling to a girl? We are a poor family, and if we send the girl to school, won't we be the laughingstock of the village?"

His wife's eyes flashed. She suddenly burst into a torrent of eloquence, as if giving vent to her accumulated feelings.

"Husband, just send her to school. Whether she can use her learning or not, it doesn't matter. Let others laugh at us. We don't care. Son or daughter, she is our only child, and she is dying to go to school.... Or do you love her only in word? Don't you count her as your own child? My goodness! How

unlucky I am! It's I who am to blame for not having had a boy as other women...."

Complaining of her bad fortune, she lifted the end of her jacket string to the corners of her eyes.

"Why are you making a scene?" Ho Gi Son scolded his wife. She was offended and went out.

After that, the husband sat there in the smoky light of the pine-resin dip, puffing away furiously at one pipeful after another. Many times he made up his mind to call on Kim Hyong Jik, only to think better of it.

He came to himself when he heard footfalls in the yard. He thought his wife and daughter were coming back and his heart sank, when he heard someone calling out: "May I come in?"

It was undoubtedly the voice of Kim Hyong Jik. Ho Gi Son sprang to his feet in a flurry and opened the door.

"Good gracious! What brought you here, sir?"

"I was passing by when I saw light in your room, so I just dropped in."

"Please come in. My home is so shabby that you'll...."

"Oh, never mind."

Ho Gi Son showed the teacher into the room, but there was not even an old cushion for the guest to sit on. The floor was covered with a worn mat. Ho Gi Son was ill at ease, not knowing what to do.

But the teacher did not seem to worry, he just sat down on the bare mat. Ho Gi Son, too, sat down, feeling small.

"I should have paid a visit to your home long ago.... Are your folk away from home?" the teacher asked without ceremony.

"Yes, they've gone to a neighbour's...." Ho Gi Son faltered out.

"Is your boy out, too?"

Ho Gi Son was consternated.

"What?... Oh yes," he faltered.

"That boy of yours is handsome and looks bright. Yesterday morning I met him while I walked past your house, and he saluted me so politely. He's well-mannered.... You have a good son, I say. Ha, ha."

Ho Gi Son sat mute, his face reddening, beads of perspiration on his forehead.

For some time the teacher watched the man who was fidgeting restlessly, and inquired:

"Besides that boy how many children do you have?"

"That's our only child."

"Is he?"

The teacher was surprised. Now he could not understand Ho Gi Son. Why doesn't he want to give an education to an only son? And why is he so upset and panic-stricken when you ever mention his son? There must be some untold reason, the teacher thought. He looked at Ho Gi Son who sat, his head lowered deeply. For a while he hesitated to ask the reason why Ho had refused to have the boy enrolled in the school. Then he decided he would do in a roundabout way, and broke from the subject.

"The farming season has set in and you must be busy, but you've worked very hard on rebuilding the school," said the teacher. "Thanks to the efforts of you, Mr. Ho Gi Son, and other villagers, the school will be opened soon...."

At this moment Ho Gi Son suddenly raised his head and in a trembling voice called: "Sir!"

It was so unexpected that Kim Hyong Jik could not answer but just stared at Ho Gi Son. Ho's look was pleading. He went on to say:

"To tell the truth, the child is a girl."

"What?!" exclaimed the teacher in real surprise. "Your child is a girl?"

"Yes. She's my only daughter," Ho Gi Son mumbled his reply, drooping his head.

For a minute Kim Hyong Jik sat speechless gazing sympathetically at this upset peasant. Then he asked gently:

"What's the story? Quite honestly, I came here to talk with you about your child. But how come you dress a big girl like a boy?"

Ho Gi Son's head remained on his breast. His heart was choked with an undefined sadness. He felt as if the teacher were a blood relation. He could hardly repress an urge to tell the teacher the whole story of his unhappy agonized past.

He had lived a lonely life; he had grown up with neither parents, nor brother or sister. He had no kith or kin. All his life he had been accustomed to being ordered about, abused and insulted. He was resigned to his lot. In this wide world he had no one to feel for him or to console him.

"There'll be no end to the story of my miserable life," said Ho Gi Son, trying to suppress his rising emotions. "What's the good of telling the story of a mere nobody like me?"

"No, don't say that. We poor people must open our troubled hearts to each other and comfort and support one another. Who else can we rely on?"

The teacher's words brought a lump in Ho Gi Son's throat. He muttered, "Thank you, sir." So considerate, reading my mind like a book! He thought. He felt all choked up. Collecting himself, he began to tell his story.

Ho Gi Son was born the son of a nobleman's bond servant. He could not remember his parents. When he was a little boy of six or seven he was taken away from his mother. He only remembered now that he cried lustily with his arms locked around his mother's neck when a strong hand pulled his mother off and then dragged him away, and that as he was carried away by the man there was a string tightly held in his hand, which had ripped off his mother's cotton jacket when he was torn away from her. He had been sold to another nobleman's house in the township of Yangdok (this he learned later when he was older). A bondman was no better than a beast of burden. He could be bought and sold or even killed without scruple. A bondman was worked all the time, day and night. Bondmen might walk a hundred miles or a thousand, as far as they were told, carrying a palanquin on their shoulders in which sat their master, his potbelly fattened on meat and wine.

Some ten years earlier, the nobleman had been bankrupted all of a sudden, and the bond servants were to be sold alongside the estates. At the time Ho Gi Son had been secretly engaged to a bondmaid in the house, his present wife. Hotganne (Open shed) was her name because she was born in an open shed. One night Ho Gi Son ran into Hotganne in the courtyard. She was as pale as death, but her eyes glittered strangely. She had come out to bid him farewell. She had been sold first and was to be taken far away to some strange place in the south next morning. She said she would kill herself rather than being dragged off like a draught animal.

Her moist eyes bore a fixed determination. Ho Gi Son had been prepared for the disastrous situation, but now that the moment had arrived, he felt everything go black before his eyes. Hotganne was right; it would be better to die than

live like a dog or a pig. Let's die together, he thought. The next moment the idea of escape crossed his mind. If they succeeded, it would be good, and if they were caught, it would mean death, and death was nothing to fear. That very night Ho Gi Son climbed over the wall of the house taking his betrothed with him and they made off.

It was a winter night and there was a snowstorm raging. In face of death he led his wife by the hand into the depths of rugged mountains in Yangdok. There was no place to shelter, the snowstorm was howling all around. But by some miracle they stayed alive and got as far as Kangdong.

In order to evade the watchful eyes of the authorities, they would hide in the daytime in some cavern or under a pile of fallen leaves in a mountain, and go down into some out-of-the-way village at night to beg for food. They roamed from place to place and, at last, having had not a morsel for two days, collapsed beside a mountain path where none but woodmen would come.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Kim Hyong Jik in amazement, edging up towards Ho Gi Son. "You had a close call. Well, what happened next?"

"A kind-hearted man happened to come there to gather firewood, and he saved us. We passed that winter in hiding in his house, and the next spring he found us a job as resident servants in a rich man's house in the township of Kangdong. And this rich man was none other than Pak Byong Tae who is now living in this village. In those days his father was still alive."

"Well indeed! You've had very hard times."

"But what good was it to escape at such a great risk? There's little difference between a servant and a bondman. The next year after we became servants my wife gave birth to Sun Hui, my daughter. The mere thought of those days makes me shudder."

"A mishap again?"

"Yes, sir. My wife was near her time, but she was worked all day long, from dawn till late at night—drawing water, cooking, sweeping and scrubbing all the floors in the main building and the annex. They even made her go out to the river to break the ice and do the washing, and that in the middle of winter. And one day, she sank down on the ice and gave

birth...." Ho Gi Son was choking and could not continue.

"How terrible!" Anger flashed across the teacher's face.

"Both mother and the baby fell seriously ill, burning with fever," Ho Gi Son went on. "But have-nots are not allowed to lie quietly in their sickbed. In less than ten days we were packed off from the house."

The teacher took Ho Gi Son's hands. He was furious and his hands were burning hot. Usually Kim Hyong Jik looked so gentle and pleasant, but now his face turned furious, which was something incredible to Ho Gi Son. Ho hung his head and continued:

"But we are people who count for nothing in this world, and we shouldn't resent others. Indeed, human lives are so tough. I laid the sick mother and baby in the shed of someone's house, with straw mats to screen them against the wind, and left them alone to die. 'End your worthless lives, you are more miserable than beasts. After your death I'll kill myself, too,' I said to myself. But they didn't die; human lives are so tough, you know. And when the spring came round, the mother and the baby picked up. So we wandered about till we arrived and settled here in Naedong. Then I reclaimed a few hundred *pyong* of wasteland on the bank of the Sujong-chon and sowed it with barley and barnyard millet to keep the pot boiling. Then, one year a 'land survey squad' appeared from nowhere and announced all the land was Japanese property. And sometime after that, Pak Byong Tae came and declared that the land was now his. So here we are, again working Pak's land to gain a living...."

"Why, you mean you're again in bondage to a fellow who is no better than an enemy?"

"There is no other way. Necessity is a hard master. I beg your pardon, sir, I think I've told you a lot of awful things, and made you angry." Ho Gi Son was sorry for him, and apologized.

"Oh, no, don't talk like that. Go ahead and finish your story."

Ho Gi Son decided to relate his story to the end now that he had started. He continued:

"What hope can I have or what luck can I expect, a humble man like me? Live as long as I live and die when I die, that's all I can hope for. But man doesn't always think that

way. I've lived such a life, but I would like to have children and see them live like human beings. That was my humble hope. But my wife had such a bad time when Sun Hui was born that she can never have another child. I'm ill-starred and my family line will just die out. But now it can't be helped. I have no other way but just to live on, pinning all my hopes on Sun Hui.

"So we have dressed our daughter like a boy since she was a baby, because we so longed for a son, and also we wanted the child to grow up as healthy as a boy. Thinking about it now, I know it was a sheer folly.

"But these last days Sun Hui keeps asking me to send her to school. This evening even my wife was thoughtless enough to insist on sending the girl to school. Sir, it's absurd for a man of my status to give schooling to a daughter. Moreover, what good is it to give education to a lass? I couldn't calm my troubled mind about it; I was worrying whether to tell you about my trouble or not, and here you are." Ho Gi Son wound up his story with a forlorn look.

Kim Hyong Jik sat silent and looked out of the window, deep in thought.

The people are groaning under the rapacious exploitation of the nobles and landlords, he thought. And they have lost their country too. From Ho Gi Son's touching story he could picture the position of all the Korean people—a people without a country, more miserable than a dog in a house of death.

There was a long silence in the room. Ho Gi Son looked more and more uneasily at the teacher. He regretted having troubled him with his whole story. Then the teacher slowly turned his face towards him, and said:

"Thank you, Sun Hui's father, for having taken me into your confidence."

Kim Hyong Jik's words seemed to mean a great deal, expressing warmth of heart, but Ho Gi Son was at a loss which way to take them. He stared abstractedly at the teacher.

"Let us give schooling to Sun Hui," said Kim Hyong Jik firmly. Ho Gi Son was dazed. The teacher went on:

"She must be educated. It is wrong to look down on girls. Women are man's equals as human beings. So why should they be treated as subhuman? That is an evil idea invented by the Japs, the nobles and the wealthy so as to use women

for their pleasure and even to traffic in them. Just think of it. Why should women be slighted as subhuman?..."

Ho Gi Son saw nothing to contradict him. Kim Hyong Jik continued:

"A daughter is as good as a son. Let's get Sun Hui enrolled in the school. Let us educate and bring her up to be a great woman who can work to destroy this foul society and build a new one in which the common people like you, Sun Hui's father and mother, could live in peace."

"Why, you mean even a girl can be educated to be a useful person for the country?" asked Ho Gi Son wide-eyed.

"Why not? Even in olden times when women were held very cheap, there were many women who did great services for the country and for society. From among them came scholars academically far more distinguished than men, generals who took up arms against foreign invaders, who delivered our country from great calamity, and inventors who designed efficient machines for the conveniences of people. Especially in Korea which has been ruined and where tens of millions of people like you are suffering terribly, we need many people who will fight to save our country and to build a new society. It is high time that all of us, men and women, young and old, joined in this fight."

"You mean that my Sun Hui could become such a person if she were educated?" asked Ho Gi Son. His expression was mixed with hope and doubt.

"Of course she can. A man is what his education and upbringing make him. Let us bring up Sun Hui to be such a person. Please send your daughter to school in a girl's dress."

"Thank you, sir." Ho Gi Son, choked with emotion, could say no more. He just grasped the teacher's warm hands.

Back home from Ho Gi Son's, Kim Hyong Jik could not get to work but fell deep into thought. Ho Gi Son's amazing life story had both shocked and angered him. Now he realized all the more keenly how heavy and difficult was the task that had devolved on him, on him who had resolved to dedicate his whole life to the revolutionary cause, to save the country and the people.

He thought of the many shortcomings in his work. He was still unable to delve into the bottom of the villagers' hearts,

to mingle with them as one; his mind was going round and round about the work of rebuilding the school and he wasn't getting anywhere. If he opened the gate of the school without really knowing the situation in the village, how many children would come? And even if they did all come, how could he give them real understanding while he was ignorant of their families' lives, their troubles, sorrows, and their aspirations? And how much harder to rally all the villagers to the cause of national restoration?

It was quite likely that Komannyo's family and Yu Bok's over the hill in Chungbami were no less miserable than Ho Gi Son's.... I must look deep into the villagers' hearts, he thought.

There was a mountain of work to do. While rebuilding the schoolhouse, he had to compile and duplicate the schoolbooks and prepare various fixtures and teaching materials. At the same time he had to check up on the activities of the comrades working in other areas and give them guidance. Meanwhile, he must not be slow in going among the villagers; that must have priority. This, that and all the rest had to be attended to. He had to push ahead with everything at all costs.

From the next day, day or evening, whenever he could spare the time, he visited villagers for intimate talks. He would go to Sangbami and Chungbami and chat with people. Then back across Mt. Ponghwa-san late at night to duplicate textbooks until daybreak.

Through his talks with village folk, he learned, as he had expected, that each one of them had his own sad distressing story. Some, like Ho Gi Son, thought it unnecessary to educate their girls, and others refused to send their daughters because they were short of work hands. Yet others dismissed the idea of educating peasant children altogether.

But the teacher was patient, called on them and met them over and over, discussed their troubles with them or explained kindly to them the things they had not understood.

Doing practically without food or sleep, he persevered in his efforts.

5

Late March. Balmy spring. Pink azaleas begin to bud out on the sunny side of Mt. Ponghwa-san; and golden bell bushes covering the fence of every house and the branches of apricot trees in the back yards are beginning to swell; willows, white poplars and mulberry trees beside the wells and along the edges of the fields are turning green. The plain is green with wheat and barley, stirring gently in the warm spring breeze. At sunrise skylarks sing in their sweet, silvery voices high up in the sky. A jagged skyline of towering mountain peaks is dimly seen in the distant haze across the Maekjon plain.

It was early morning and Kim Hyong Jik was walking along a footpath on the edge of a barley field. The charms of the spring seemed to intoxicate him, body and soul. Dewdrops glittered like beads on the lightly swaying barley leaves. Coming to a halt, he looked up at the skylarks that frolicked and twittered up in the sky, and the swelling flower buds on the apricot trees that lined the path. The murmuring water came from a nearby spring beside the footpath. The rocks around it were already green with moss, and the gurgling spring welled up between them. The crystal waters overflowed into the ditch. He watched the fountain as in a trance; he felt as if the crystal waters were flowing into his heart. He approached the spring and, stooping down, scooped up the water in his cupped hands. The limpid water fell through the fingers. He dipped up more water. The crisp flavour of spring seemed to soak through his whole body. He straightened up.

"It's spring!" he exclaimed to himself.

It seemed just a few days since he had heard the ice cracking on the Taedong-gang River at Mangyongdae. And now the spring could be seen all round. Scenes of his beloved Mangyongdae floated vividly before his eyes—the Mangyong-bong overgrown with tall pine trees, his home on the sunny hillside, the delightful Jung Son playing on the spacious dry turf in front of the house and singing; his dear parents, wife and brothers weeding the green barley fields on the bank of the

Taedong-gang whose waters moved as imperceptibly as in a dream.

It is nearly a month now since I left home, he thought. How are they faring there? Is Grandmother well? Is Jung Son growing and in good health? The day after his arrival here, he had written home to say he had arrived safely. He had kept silence ever since as he had been pressed with work.

As he started to walk again, his mind went back to the comrades with whom he had parted about a month before. He looked at them in his mind's eye, the figures of reliable comrades—his brother-in-law, now in Unryul, Hong Jun Gol who must have gone to meet Commander Chu Pung, Chon Yong Tae in Chunggang, Kim Sok Ha in Kyongsang Province and Pang In Su in Mangyongdae. He had received only one short letter from each of them telling him they had arrived safely and started work. He was sure that they would be working well, but was nevertheless worried about many hardships they might encounter because their work was different in content and method and on a larger scale than their former activities. In a month or so he would receive more detailed word.

He walked faster, collecting his thoughts. The school would be opened today. The ceremony should go without a hitch.

The schoolhouse came into view. Its stylish curving roof rose into the blue sky. He quickened his step. Coming into the school grounds, he stood still for a while. The schoolhouse looked excellent in its own way. The thick stout pillars supporting the roof gave out a smell of pine resin. The new window paper was dazzling white in the morning sun.

On the left a shiny bell hung from the eaves—Sun Hui had polished it up the previous night.

Stepping onto the earthen bank under the eaves, Kim Hyong Jik opened one of the doors quietly. Sunlight poured in and lit up the schoolroom brightly. The room was spacious, the walls were neatly coated with red clay, clean mats were spread out over the floor, the long desks stood in neat rows, a big new blackboard hung on the front wall, a map of Korea on the left wall, a frame with the inscription of characters *Chiwon* on the right—all this was clearly visible in the brilliant sunlight.

He had got everything ready for the opening the night before working late with villagers and children. But he looked

into very nook and corner once again to make sure there was no slip in the preparations.

On the teacher's desk in front of the blackboard lay the register he had prepared the previous night after the list of new school children had been finally confirmed. Textbooks and school things were piled up by the bookcase, ready to be handed out to the pupils.

A smile flickered across his face. Before long Chong Jin Gu, now the headmaster of the school, would appear with a door plate to hang out, then all would be complete.

Kim Hyong Jik shut the door and turned round on the earthen bank. He stood looking at the village for some time and then went to the bell.

"Clang, clang—" the bell rang out, the clear tones sounding out all round the quiet village. The last loud echo came back from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Soon humming voices were heard from the lanes. People appeared on every path leading to school—the main village road, the short cuts and footpaths across the fields.

From somewhere came the boisterous singing of children:

It takes the meeting of a thousand rivers
To make Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
....

Then, as if to chime in, other voices rang out from another direction:

And if we join up all our hard endeavours,
Our fund of knowledge will increase.

Kim Hyong Jik stood under the eaves and looked deeply stirred, his eyes slightly moist.

"Master!" "Mas-ter!" Children shouted at the tops of their voices, racing into the school grounds. The teacher stepped down into the yard. Surrounding him with shouts of joy, the boys saluted him with a bob of their close-cropped heads: "Good morning, sir." The girls bowed their neatly-dressed heads.

"Good morning, children!" answered the master, patting the children's heads. Now the parents entered the yard, gathered around Kim Hyong Jik and greeted him, their voices full of gratitude.

Kim Hyong Jik who had been exchanging civilities with the grown-ups now came to a stop. Before him stood Sun Hui. She was no longer in boy's clothes. She wore a black cotton skirt and a white jacket. Her neatly plaited hair was sleek. It was parted straight down the middle. Behind her stood a timid small middle-aged woman, Sun Hui's mother.

"Oh, Sun Hui!" he stepped forward holding out his hands. He was delighted to see her.

"Master, good morning...," mumbled the girl lowering her head and blushing.

"So you are here too. I'm very pleased to see you," Kim Hyong Jik greeted the mother of Sun Hui while he laid his hand on the girl's shoulder.

The woman who had been standing vacantly as in a dream suddenly came to herself and said confusedly:

"Sir, we don't know how to thank...." She bowed low, unable to finish her sentence. She could not raise her head; she brought the end of her jacket string to her eyes, turning away her face.

Shouts of joy burst from the children.

"Oh, look at our school!"

"It's splendid!"

Kim Hyong Jik took his hand off the Sun Hui's shoulder and turned round. The earthen bank was crowded with children looking into the schoolroom through the open door, those at the back pushing and jostling or standing on tiptoe to get a peep inside.

"Why, the urchins have got a nerve, opening the door without permission," someone called out reproachfully.

Kim Hyong Jik stepped silently up onto the earthen bank and threw both doors wide open. Then he said to the pupils:

"Yes, this is your school. You're the owners. Go on in and have a look."

The children looked up blankly at the teacher for a moment, before one of them cried, "Let's go in!" and all of them quickly tore off their straw sandals or rubber shoes and poured into the room, shouting "Hurrah!" They made a terrific hubbub.

"Oh, there is a desk for everyone!"

"What's this?"

"It's for singing. The master said it's called an organ."

"The blackboard is so smooth...."

Some of the boys sat cross-legged at desks, others opened the organ lid and looked into it curiously. The grown-ups, too, came up the earthen bank and looked into the room. Words failed them to express their joy and gratitude. Watching the scene from behind, Kim Hyong Jik, too, was delighted.

"Master!" someone called from the back. Turning round, he saw Ho Gi Son standing there with a plank under his arm.

"Well, is the door plate ready?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, coming down to the yard.

"No, sir," replied Ho Gi Son, lifting up the plank with his hands. It was chalked white so that stone ink might not spread.

"Why is it not written?"

"I finished up the plate and took it to Mr. Chong Jin Gu this morning. But he said he couldn't write it and told me to take it to you...."

"Why can't he write it?" Kim Hyong Jik could not understand.

At that moment Chong Jin Gu walked hurriedly into the yard. He was carrying a writing case with him. Kim Hyong Jik stared at him, unable to make head or tail of this. Standing face to face with Kim Hyong Jik, the old man gathered his breath for a few seconds and said:

"After all, you will have to write the door plate, sir."

"What's the matter with you? Wasn't it agreed that you, the headmaster, would write it?"

At a meeting of the parents of the pupils the previous evening, Kim Hyong Jik had recommended the old man as headmaster and his recommendation was accepted.

"No. In fact, I am no more than an honorary headmaster. I accepted the post just because you advised me to. But it's you who built this school. When Ho Gi Son came with the plank I took up my writing brush and dipped it in ink. But I thought better of it. To make this door plate really memorable it is good and proper that you should write it; moreover, I have an unattractive hand. So please do write it, sir. Now what does everybody else say?" The old man asked, glancing round at the pupils' parents for their approval.

All the villagers supported him.

"The headmaster is right."

"Please write it, sir."

Kim Hyong Jik found himself obliged to write the door plate.

"I've brought an inkstone and writing brushes here. Look here, Chun Bo. Go to the house at the back and fetch a straw mat, will you?" Chong Jin Gu fussed about, giving Kim Hyong Jik no chance to say a word.

When the mat was spread out in the yard Ho Gi Son laid down the plank in the middle of it. The headmaster set down the writing case beside it and began to rub the ink stick vigorously on the inkstone. The children and parents crowded round. Kim Hyong Jik took off his rubber shoes and sat down on the mat. Seated before the plank, he took a big writing brush out of the case. Dipping the brush well in the ink and adjusting its tip, he held it over the plank. All the spectators closely watched the tip of the writing brush. Suddenly Kim Hyong Jik's eyes glistened, and in bold strokes he dashed off the four characters 明新学校 (Myongsin School).

A tang of ink wafted up from the characters, every stroke of which seemed to be alive and moving. Headmaster Chong Jin Gu nodded his silvery beard, saying admiringly:

"What a splendid hand! So bold and vigorous, the characters look as if they will take wing!"

Kim Hyong Jik lifted the plate carefully with both hands. The people made way for him. He went up to the earthen bank and approached the massive pillar in the centre of the front wall of the house. The people thronged towards the earthen bank. He put the plate squarely on the pillar and looked over his shoulder, calling: "Sun Hui's father, come and drive in a nail, please."

"Yes? Me?" Ho Gi Son was bewildered. Kim Hyong Jik nodded and smiled. Blushing, Ho hastily took a hammer and a big nail out of his straw shoulder bag.

The hammering echoed through the whole village. The people were deeply moved, recalling the sounds of the axe at dawn which had awakened the whole village on the day after Kim Hyong Jik arrived. The sound stopped. The door plate was hung high up on the pillar.

"Long live our school!" a boy shouted in happy excitement, and was answered by loud applause.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" everybody shouted, young and old, their hands up over their heads. Birds singing in the thick woods on Mt. Ponghwa-san were startled and fluttered up into the sky in flocks.

Kim Hyong Jik's heart was full as he watched the villagers

and children who were shouting for joy. He studied the pupils closely one by one. It seemed that all whose names were entered in the roll were present. But there was an empty corner in his heart. There were a few children who had been kept out by unavoidable circumstances. The case of Duk Bu, the servant of Pak Byong Tae, grieved him most. For he remembered that early one morning the boy had brought in a load of timber for rafters on his A-frame carrier. After dropping off his load on the deserted school grounds, he had gone away. He still could see vividly the boy's retreating figure. Later, he would appear at the building site at odd times and mould clay or carry tiles and slip away again unnoticed. At this moment the boy was probably standing among the furrows, his shoulders sagging under a heavy load of manure piled up on his A-frame carrier, listening to the shouts raised here, his eyes swimming in tears. The night before Kim Hyong Jik had made up his mind and called on Pak Byong Tae, but he was away in Pyongyang. Of course, he knew that talking to Byong Tae would do no good.

Hearing the hum of the villagers' voices, Kim Hyong Jik doubled his fists tightly. I've only just started my work, he thought. There was a long and thorny path ahead yet to the goal he had set that bleak night at Mangyongdae—that lofty goal to liberate the country and build a new society to deliver people like Duk Bu from their distress. Reaffirming his resolve, he took a step forward under the eaves and calmly declared:

"Parents and children, we will now begin the opening ceremony. Let us go in."

The opening ceremony was soon over. Textbooks, exercise books, pencils and other school things were handed out to the pupils. Kim Hyong Jik spoke about the subjects of study, the timetable and the school rules. Then he dismissed the class.

When the ceremony was over, he asked some ten of the grown-ups to stay behind. They were from Naedong, Sangbami and Chungbami and had worked selflessly to rebuild the school.

Kim Hyong Jik made a detailed report to them on the preparations to open the school, and said that the successful inauguration of the school was due to the full cooperation and mutual assistance of the people of the three villages and the headmaster Chong Jin Gu, An Sin Do and other public-spirited persons who had volunteered for various kinds of work. He

underlined the lesson to be drawn from their experience—to unite the people's strength not only to run Myongsin School well but to expand and develop it in the future. This necessitated the formation of a certain type of organization. Saying this, he proposed that a school guild be set up. All present agreed.

Kim Hyong Jik explained the aims and rules he had prepared for the guild, and these were adopted unanimously. When he recommended the headmaster Chong Jin Gu as chairman of the guild, there was no objection.

Somewhere in the village there was a loud chorus of children's voices singing.

At dawn next morning a trumpet sounded loud and clear from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Kim Hyong Jik was blowing it under a tall pine on the flat place half way up the mountain. The notes rose with a flourish, dropped to low mellow tones, to end in a long high-pitched finish. As the echoes were dying, he again raised the trumpet and blew it powerfully, sounding high, shrill notes. Children dashed out of their houses and bounced up the hillside with shouts of hurrahs.

Soon there came loud words of command from the woods: "One, two..." given by the teacher. The children vigorously bent and straightened their limbs at his commands.

From this day an animated life began to unfold at the foot of Mt. Ponghwa-san every day. The children got up to their teacher's trumpet call and began their daily routine at his words of command.

The trumpet call seemed to be a forceful cry harbingering dawn over Korea, her regeneration, her bright future.

6

Seated in the lamplight in the spacious empty schoolroom, Kim Hyong Jik was driving his pen. Occasionally he would pause and think, and then begin to write again. The sound of the pen running across the white paper could be heard. He was preparing a detailed programme of instruction for the following day. He might have dispensed with this, because he had been teaching for four or five years and had taught this subject many times. Moreover, he was himself the author of their textbooks. But in his years of teaching he had never taught a single class without preparing a detailed programme. He regarded this as a sacred duty a teacher must fulfil conscientiously.

Teachers were apt to neglect this, some with the shallow view that only poor and inexperienced teachers need do it. Some of his colleagues at Sunhwa School had held that view.

But Kim Hyong Jik would assert that the more experienced and educated the teacher, the more importance he would attach to a programme. Why? Because, he said that if the unsophisticated mind of a pupil could be compared to soil, the programme could be regarded as the teacher's plan to fertilize it. Which seeds to sow, how to manure it, water it and give it sunshine so that it might bear good fruit? A teacher must make every effort to sow good seeds, use the best fertilizer and give them enough rain and sunshine.

After all, the aim of education was to train dependable people to restore the nation's sovereignty and build a new state in the future. Therefore, it was essential to plant and cultivate truth and progressive ideas in the children's minds and to give them a wide range of scientific knowledge, so that they might become the heralds of the future. In the fast-advancing modern times the human stock of truth, ideas and scientific knowledge continually increases with new discoveries and inventions, and the textbooks and teaching plans of yesteryear are unfit for today.

So teachers must be first to learn progressive and new

scientific ideas through unremitting study and they must keep improving textbooks and curricula.

With this in mind, Kim Hyong Jik wrote new textbooks for Myongsin School. He put his heart into the work, though it was by no means easy to weave his new, far-reaching plan for the Korean revolution, the idea of *Chiwon,* into every subject or to add the new academic developments in the East and West that must be incorporated in the new textbooks. Yet no one knew how much exertion the new textbooks for the children handed out at the yesterday's opening ceremony had cost him.

For all that, when he sat down beside the lamp in the empty classroom in the evening and got to work on next day's programmes, he was still dissatisfied with his textbooks.

He finished reviewing his instruction programme as the clock on the wall struck ten. He collected up the books and papers scattered on the desk and put them in the filing cabinet in a corner. He stood there for a while, then reached out his hand and took a short stick-like object out of the cabinet. It was a bamboo flute. He took out a handkerchief from under his sleeve and wiped the flute with it. Made of purple bamboo, the flute had a quiet lustre. He put out the light and went out into the schoolyard.

It was a lovely moonlit spring night. The moon had a ring around it. She threw tender light over the vast stretches of the Maekjon plain and on the waters of the Taedong-gang. For a few moments he stood gazing out on the plain. Then he slowly moved away and walked up the hill to the right of the school. The slope was studded with rocks in different shapes and sizes, the baby pines and wild jujube trees growing in low bushes between them. When he got to the top, he chose a comfortable rock to sit on. As he looked out far over the Taedong-gang which was bathed in the moonlight, his eyes shone with emotion. He raised the flute slowly.

A gentle tune of a west Korean folk song flowed out. The strains were as mellow as the night itself. But gradually the tone changed and changed again. The tune, gentle at first, low and subdued, rose gradually and modulated to a quickened pathetic pleading. The sound rose and fell several times, and then again became smooth and flowing. Forlorn yet lively, soft yet forceful, they formed a graceful, harmonious melody.

The notes of the flute floated far and wide in the milky moonlight to the Maekjon plain beyond the slumbering village.

A boat under a white sail was floating down the moonlit Taedong-gang as in a dream. The music was entrancing. It seemed as if moonlight, wind, clouds, the waters and the sailing boat were floating far away on the notes of the flute.

Kim Hyong Jik had loved music since his early childhood. Whenever he listened to any music in which the high and low, forceful or pathetic, fast and slow notes merged into a harmonious, delicate whole, it would stir him, leaving an impression on his mind as though it had contained all the laws of the universe, the truth and substance of life and struggle. As a boy, he used to play on a bamboo flute that belonged to his grandfather, Kim Ung U, who was a good flutist. On the autumn night when the "Ulsa Protectorate Treaty" was signed, Kim Hyong Jik had played the flute on the bank of the Sunhwa-gang. It was said that his piping had sounded so heartrending that it made the whole village weep. He learned to play the violin, the organ and several other instruments while a student at Sunhwa and Sungsil Schools. After he had started his revolutionary activities, he wrote songs and set them to music to inspire the younger generation with courage and fighting spirit.

The flowing sounds of the flute stopped. There was dead silence, as though everything on the earth had stopped moving. The moonlight, the wind, the clouds, the river, the boat seemed to have frozen as the music stopped. There was an earnest yet indefinable look in the face of the player as he stared out over the fields. He put the flute to his lips again.

A low, deep sound began to flow, like sobbing. The strains were grim and pathetic. He had learned the tune in Chientao the previous winter. To him it was not just a song; it was the lament, the wailing of all the Koreans whose blood was shed by Japanese swords. It could bring hot tears to his eyes and make his blood boil.

The mournful, touching notes of the piping rose high into the sky to float over the hills, fields and the river to wake the land and shake the soul of the nation out of its slumber.

Suddenly his moist eyes shone and the flute gave out a penetrating sound, and changed to quick tempo again. The sound rose and became vigorous, forceful, like a giant shuddering and rising to his feet. Then it was modulated to martial strains, pressing forward, fighting, destroying, surging up like waves, cascading down, and flowing mightily like a majestic

river. He rose to his feet, without knowing it still playing his flute.

The music stopped, but the sound was still there, reverberating over the moonlit fields and mountains to the distant horizon. Quietly he took the flute from his lips and took a deep breath. He felt much refreshed.

It was not till then that he felt someone behind him. He turned round and saw a boy standing there shyly. The boy drew back a step under his gaze.

"It's Duk Bu, isn't it?" Kim Hyong Jik said, recognizing the boy. He stepped towards him but stopped short. He saw tears in the boy's eyes which were looking up at him. It was Duk Bu whom he had sadly missed during the school's opening ceremony.

"What's the matter?" asked Kim Hyong Jik gently.

"Nothing," Duk Bu answered, confused. With an embarrassed smile, he wiped the corners of his eyes with the end of his short, tattered sleeve.

"Then what brought you out here at this hour of the night?"

"Just to kill time, sir. I came to have a look at the school, then I heard you playing the flute, and so...," said Duk Bu and hung his head.

"To look at the school?" Kim Hyong Jik repeated Duk Bu's words, half to himself, looking at the boy's unkempt hair. In contrast to his big head, his long neck looked too thin. The boy's old ragged clothes revealed thin, bony shoulders. Kim Hyong Jik's heart ached in pity. Before he knew he moved over to the boy and put his hands on his shoulders.

"You want to learn, don't you?" asked the teacher in an undertone, his voice slightly unsteady.

"Yes, sir," Duk Bu nodded without looking up.

The boy's answer cut his heart. For some time Kim Hyong Jik remained silent, his eyes glued on the sailing boat which was moving down round a faraway bend of the Taedong-gang. A lighted lamp on the boat was flickering.

Kim Hyong Jik's heart was sad for he could not say readily: "Oh, yes, you must learn. Come to school tomorrow." And nothing short of this would do, he knew that all too well. Yet he asked the boy, "Duk Bu, where is your native place?" The teacher felt impelled to ask the question to know the poor boy's circumstances.

"Native place?" said the boy, raising his eyes to look up at the teacher. There was a question in his clear eyes. "What does native place mean, sir?"

"The place where you were born and bred."

"Where I was born and bred?" stammered the boy somewhat timidly. "I don't know where it is, sir."

"You don't know your own native place.... Well, then how come you have no parents? Are they dead?"

"I only had a father."

"What do you mean by 'Only had a father'?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, quite surprised at the boy answering like that as if it was quite normal that he should only have had a father.

"My father used to take me along with him on a box he was carrying on his back. I suppose he was moving from one building site to another."

"Well, where is he now?" prodded Kim Hyong Jik.

For a little while Duk Bu fixed his melancholy eyes on the teacher and then turned away.

"He died," answered the boy with a heavy sigh.

"How sad. When and how?"

"When I was six or so, my father was working on building a road near the county seat of Kangdong. One day many uncles came carrying my father. He was all smeared with blood. They said he had been beaten up by the Japs," said Duk Bu in a faltering, sinking voice.

"And then?" asked Kim Hyong Jik drawing closer to the boy.

"My father lay ill on a straw mat under the Kangdong bridge, and I ... went begging from door to door. When I came back with food, my father would take my hand in his skinny hand and say in tears. 'My life is so tough that I have to keep hanging on in this thrice-cursed world! But if I died leaving you poor creature behind....' He broke, and only shed tears. One morning when I came back to the bridge with the food I had begged...," Duk Bu was unable to go on. Kim Hyong Jik gazed silently at the boy. Then, Duk Bu resumed, mumbling:

"I was so happy I had come back with plenty of food, so I went hopping and calling, 'Papa, papa'. But there was no answer. I didn't know what death was, so I shook my father for some while to wake him up, asking him to sit up and have some breakfast."

There was a catch in his voice. He couldn't carry on and

hung his head low. His thin shoulders were heaving. "Oh, Duk Bu," cried Kim Hyong Jik holding the boy to him.

"Master!" cried the boy in a husky voice, throwing himself into the broad chest of Kim Hyong Jik. He nestled in as if to push up the teacher's chest with his huge head. Kim Hyong Jik tightened his arms around the boy.

"Poor little chap!" thought Kim Hyong Jik to himself. "What a pity to live all alone in this accursed world! How hard, how hard...."

The thought of the boy's fate hurt him. Duk Bu's thin, bareboned body held against him was shaking. This anguished him still more. Hugging the boy firmly, he raised his head and looked far into the sky. In the moonlight the quiet sky and earth were still and beautiful as in a dream. But between the boundless sky and the vast earth there must be uncounted tragedies like Duk Bu's, he thought. And in this limitless space there must be so many sad eyes, like Duk Bu's, imploring help. But I cannot save this one boy, Duk Bu now in my embrace, from his piteous fate, nor satisfy his modest desire to learn, he thought.

Suddenly his eyes shone. He shut his mouth tight in firm resolve.

"No, Duk Bu," cried he voicelessly. "I won't let you slip away from my embrace. I'll be your father, your elder brother from now."

"Duk Bu," he said quietly. No reply. Only the boy's shoulders were shaking.

"Duk Bu," he said again, a little louder, shaking the boy's shoulders. The boy raised his head, and his eyes were wet.

"Come along with me," said Kim Hyong Jik resolutely, and took the perplexed boy by the hand and strode down the hill. Duk Bu went with him, staggering.

Entering the classroom, the teacher lit the lamp and opened the bookcase, out of which he took textbooks, notebooks and other school things and put them neatly on the desk. Duk Bu was standing still, warily eyeing the teacher and the school things alternatively. The teacher stood silent for a moment and then went over to the bookcase and took out a black wrapping cloth, with which he did up the things on the desk. The teacher looked at Duk Bu again.

"You could find time in the evening, I expect?"

"In the evening, sir?" said the boy, unable to catch the meaning.

"Yes."

"I think I can, if I'm not sent on an errand.... But the servants' quarters are not lighted at night."

"Then, come to me with this bundle in the evenings, starting from tomorrow," said Kim Hyong Jik, holding out the bundle to Duk Bu. The boy was at a loss what to say, and only stared up at the teacher. Kim Hyong Jik took a step towards Duk Bu and put the bundle in his hand.

"Let's study from tomorrow evening," said he. "It might be a bit hard for you, you have to get up early in the morning and sweat all day.... But, Duk Bu, let's try and stick it out."

For a while the boy stood gazing up at the benefactor, and his eyes sparkled with joy.

"Do you really mean that, sir?" Duk Bu asked wonderingly, unable to believe the unexpected turn of fortune. No one had ever helped him like that before.

"Of course I do, ha, ha...," laughed the teacher. "You must carry books around with you and study whenever you find time. You will have to persevere."

Kim Hyong Jik spoke affectionately, patting the boy's big shaggy head. He liked the boy like a son or younger brother. He felt as if he had been reunited with his son, his own flesh and blood, who by some fickle fate had been torn away from him to suffer many hardships in this merciless world.

He held the boy close and his heart went out to him.

"I'll work hard, sir," said Duk Bu loudly, hugging his bundle of books, his quiet eyes shining with ecstatic happiness.

"You're a good lad." Kim Hyong Jik repeated the words, holding the boy's head in his arms.

Duk Bu bowed low as he said, "Good night, sir." But then he hesitated, seemed reluctant to go.

"Now, run on home, it's late," said the teacher gently, touching the boy's shoulder with his hand.

"Yes, sir." Duk Bu lowered his head again before he turned and went. The boy's silhouette receded in the bright moonlight. As Kim Hyong Jik stood gazing after him, Duk Bu began to sing:

It takes the meeting of a thousand rivers
To make Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
....

The brisk sound of footsteps and the cheerful song became more and more distant.

"He even learned the song," Kim Hyong Jik thought. He could still see the boy's serene delighted eyes.

7

On the day after the meeting in Pyongyang, the comrades had each left for a different part of the country, except for Hong Jun Gol who spent another day with Kim Sok Ha from Kyongsang Province; he had some business to attend to.

The two men spent a wakeful night together, lying side by side in the room and talking. Thinking back over the day's meeting made them warm inside. Their conversation drifted endlessly from one subject to another, starting from the meeting.

With Pak Yun Hwan of Unryul who had been absent from the meeting through illness, Kim Sok Ha had been guided by Kim Hyong Jik ever since his middle-school days. So he knew a lot about him.

Kim Sok Ha was big built, tough and open-minded. Yet, paradoxically enough, he was also a scrupulous and passionate man. He warmed up as he was telling stories about Kim Hyong Jik.

When Kim Hyong Jik was at a private village school as a boy, the teacher once ignored his excellent composition giving top marks to a poor one by the son of a rich family. Kim Hyong Jik wrapped up his books and stood up, declaring: "I don't want to study under an unfair teacher like you." He walked out of the classroom. The teacher's unfairness angered the whole village, and in the end he had to come and apologize to Kim Bo Hyon, Kim Hyong Jik's father.

When Kim Hyong Jik was only 14, he and other young villagers seized a Jap who had come to Mangyongdae and

indulged in outrages on the villagers. He tied the rogue to a tree branch and gave him a good thrashing.

One day, Kim Hyong Jik came across the river to the melon field. His wife Kang Ban Sok and his sister-in-law Hyon Yang Sin were weeding the adjoining millet field. Kim Hyong Jik went into the field and rummaged among the melon plants. Then he began to pick ripe melons.

"Why, what's the matter with you, picking so many melons?" asked Kang Ban Sok, surprised to see him carrying an armful of melons out of the field. "I don't think they are ripe yet."

"They are ripe," said Kim Hyong Jik. "We do farm work without eating enough, but the fruit of our toil is all stolen by the landlords. Why should we offer to the rich the first melons? We planted them, so we should taste them first. Now, come over here."

He peeled the melons with a knife and offered them to his wife and sister-in-law. He took one himself, saying: "Only when we get rid of the landlords and drive out the Japs will all Koreans be able to live well. If we leave the Japs alone, we will never be able to free ourselves from ruin."

Listening to Kim Sok Ha, Hong Jun Gol was profoundly struck by Kim Hyong Jik's character, and asked him for more stories.

His reminiscences went back to their middle school days when Kim Sok Ha, Pak Yun Hwan and Chon Yong Tae had worked together with Kim Hyong Jik to earn their way through school. He told about the splendid argument Kim Hyong Jik had had with a Japanese teacher who had distorted Korean history, how he had embarrassed the Jap so much that he had skulked out before the period ended.

His large, straight-forward eyes shining with emotion, Kim Sok Ha told many things that had happened at the school. He said:

"As a middle-school student he worked vigorously, forming secret organizations such as a reading group and the Ilsim Fraternal Society; so he was already prominent among the youth and students well beyond Pyongyang, especially after he led the anti-American, anti-Japanese student strike at our school.

"The school authorities gave an America-worshipping, pro-Japanese education and exploited the students harshly through

their after-school work. He made up his mind to denounce the school authorities for their injustice and roused the whole student body to struggle. All of us students united around him. Remembering it makes my heart swell even now."

"What happened then?" asked Hong Jun Gol impatiently.

"We declared a strike, demanding that the America-worship and the pro-Japanese aspects of our education should stop and that the exploitation of the students be abolished. The school authorities played every mean trick, called in the police and manoeuvred craftily to break the strike by bribing individual students. But they were powerless in the face of our united struggle. Mr. Kim worked day and night calling on the students, lecturing and speaking, to knit them together still more closely. At last, he brought the school authorities to their knees."

"Ha, ha, ha. That must have been really exciting," laughed Hong Jun Gol, delighted. Kim Sok Ha laughed with him and went on:

"The day our strike ended in victory, he called us together and said, 'Now, look! We have won at last, haven't we? That is because we were firmly united in one will and purpose. Unity is really mighty.'

"These words came back to me at our last meeting. Already at that time he had the idea that unity is the only way to regain our national sovereignty."

Listening to Kim Sok Ha, Hong Jun Gol was profoundly stirred to know that Kim Hyong Jik's idea of *Chiwon* was so deep rooted.

It was nearly daybreak when the two youths went to sleep for a short while.

The next morning Kim Sok Ha took the southbound train, and Hong Jun Gol saw him off at the station. Before bidding farewell, they pressed each other's hands firmly and pledged that they would fight to the end of their lives to put Kim Hyong Jik's great idea into effect.

The same day Hong Jun Gol reached Kangdong where he put up for the night, and next morning he left for Songchon.

It was solidly a 100 *ri* from Kangdong to Chang-gol at the head of the Bloody River in Songchon. Ever since he had been in the Righteous Volunteers Army, Hong Jun Gol had been known as a good hiker and especially mountaineer. He

could walk 200 *ri* a day, perhaps because he had grown up in a mountain area.

He arrived at Changrim at lunch-time, had a meal and a bowl of home-brew at a familiar tavern, and then went on his way. He quickened his pace along the blue stream of the Piryu-gang, feasting his eyes on the familiar scenery after years of absence. In its upper reaches, the Piryu-gang branched off into a rugged gorge 30 *ri* deep. The Bloody River flowed down this gorge. The nearer he came to his home village of Chang-gol with its familiar landscape, the more excited Hong Jun Gol became. It was well past midday though the sun was still high in the sky when he reached the meeting of three roads in front of Chang-gol village. Here he had a view of the whole village whose tumbledown huts straggled along the gorge. His home village had remained unchanged in the four years since his last visit. The ramshackle hut in which Hong Jun Gol had been born and bred was on the hillside. A disturbing yet sweet feeling surged through his body as he stood gazing at the old home. His parents were no longer alive. When he had visited home four years ago, his father lay buried on the hill behind the house; and last year he had word that his mother had died. His 50-year-old eldest brother and his wife must be living in the hut with their children now, he thought. In front of the village the limpid water of the stream gurgled down over rocks. In the patches of land on the inclined stony riversides he could see people applying manure and digging out stones. There was no end of stones. He remembered how as a little boy he would follow his parents and elder brothers to the fields and pick out the stones. They picked out stones every year, and it seemed to him that evey year the stone, far from diminishing, increased. One spring day when he was exhausted from this heavy work he dropped down at the edge of the field, saying: "Let's stop sowing, Dad. Every time we sow, the stones grow up again." This had made all the family laugh, though with a tinge of bitterness.

Standing-Stone Village was in another gorge five *ri* away from Chang-gol. There was a long flat stone in the middle of the fields, hence the name, they say.

The Bloody River, too, had a legend. During a Japanese invasion of Korea in the 16th century, the story goes, a general riding a fast steed had fought hard all day long against a black dragon that was descending on the gorge; at last, just before

sunset, with a loud cry he beheaded the dragon and hurled its head into the river. The dragon's body stiffened into the Black Dragon Mountain and its blood dyed the river red, which gave it its name. The general, too, fell down dead with his horse, and their bodies turned into General's Hill, his sword, which flew out of his hand stuck in the field to become the Standing Stone more than 10 feet high.

While a boy, Hong Jun Gol would put his A-frame carrier down on the grassy hillside and lie down gazing at the sky, the mountains and the river, dreaming of flying across the sky on the legendary steed.

When he left home at 15, he stood on this Ryongma-san Mountain with three comrades thinking of the legend. The story was incredible even to his young, naive mind. But the ardent patriotism of its authors touched their heartstrings. Pledging themselves to fight to the last like the legendary general, they left for Yangdok to join a unit of the Righteous Volunteers Army rumoured to be active in that part of the country.

Then he remembered standing on this hilltop four years ago, helpless, all his original hopes defeated. His three comrades had been killed by the Japanese, the country was totally lost and the Righteous Volunteers' Movement had decayed. So, after a vagrant life for some time, he thought to visit home, and plodded all the way to his village. He was lonely, embarrassed, ashamed and helpless then. For the next two years or so he had again roamed aimlessly, carrying dagger and bombs.... At these thoughts Hong Jun Gol frowned.

He shook his head. All this was past now. Today he had great hopes, and the thought of this filled him with a great fighting will that heated the blood in his whole body. They say that sometimes misfortunes can turn to blessings. The previous autumn he attacked some Japanese officers on the Nampo highway and nearly lost the life he had spent in vain; but who could have ever imagined it would lead to his meeting Kim Hyong Jik? When he had told Kim Sok Ha this the previous night, his friend said: "It's by no means accidental; it's a result of your struggle, though your methods were wrong. At any rate, you fought on without deserting, fought for your principles, and groped for the right path." Maybe he was right. Hong Jun Gol smiled and drew a long satisfied sigh.

"Rejoice, Chang-gol Village!" he cried in the depths of his heart. "Now our country has a great leader, Mr. Kim Hyong Jik.

Rise up with me, like the general who killed the black dragon and, under Mr. Kim's leadership, hurry to the new battle field!"

Then he walked ahead towards the village. As he entered the yard of his old home, he bobbed his head and said, quite casually: "Brother, Sister, how are you?" as if he was back from a short outing. For many moments his brother and sister-in-law stared blankly at him, as if they had lost their souls. Then, recognizing him, both ran out barefoot to meet him.

The brothers took each other's hands and remained seated exchanging few words. Presently, the brother's wife came to herself and fetched water in an earthenware washbasin. Hong Jun Gol washed himself and, feeling comfortable and at home after a long absence, again sat facing his brother in the room. Three children, his nephews, were looking in at them from the yard.

"Ah, you're big boys now," Hong Jun Gol said and, taking a packet of sticks of rice candy out of his bundle, went out into the yard to offer it to the smallest boy, four or five years old. But the child refused to take it.

"Take it, child," said his mother. "Weren't you always asking when your uncle would come home?"

Then the boys took the packet readily. Hong Jun Gol ruffled his nephews' hair and went back into the room. Again the two brothers were silent for a while. The brother and his wife just looked embarrassed and studied Hong Jun Gol's face. The younger brother knew what they were worried about. The hair was turning grey on the temples of both the elder brother and his wife. They are old now, he thought.

"Where did you bury mother?" Hong Jun Gol broke the silence in a trifle quivering voice. The couple looked surprised.

"How did you know?" asked back the elder brother.

"I learned it from a man from our village last autumn."

"Did you?"

Then there was another silence.

"Mother could never rest even for a single night, you know," put in the elder brother's wife, raising the end of her skirt ribbon to her eyes. "She was worried about you all the time you were away from home. Every time the dry leaves rustled or the wind blew outside at midnight, she would wake up and go out to look for you."

"Mother kept calling for you, until the moment she breath-

ed her last," added the elder brother in his deep bass. "Before she died she would say again and again: 'They say the Independence Army has fallen apart, and what has become of him? Oh, there he comes, isn't it Jun Gol dear?' "

Jun Gol saw his old, withered mother before his eyes, and felt his heart contract.

"I'm sorry, brother." Jun Gol's voice was choked. They were silent again. Now, in a different tone of voice, the elder brother asked, "Well, are you back at home to stay?"

"For the time being...," said Jun Gol ambiguously.

"For God's sake, don't go away any more. You ought to marry and settle down now, oughtn't you? Tsk, tsk, tsk...," said the elder brother's wife, clicking her tongue to reproach the indecisive brother-in-law.

"You've seen the wide world, so I wonder if you will want to settle in our remote mountain village," said the elder brother. "But now is the time for you to get a regular job and make your own home wherever you want, is it not?"

Jun Gol was embarrassed, not knowing what to say. But what could he say to this couple who did not understand what was on his mind.

"Er, yes, I'll see to it in time.... But, brother, I think I must go to mother's grave."

He climbed Mt. Ryongma-san behind his brother, looking at the sun going down behind the Black Dragon Mountain.

There were two bleak tombs side by side. In front of them a pasqueflower swayed in the breeze. Hong Jun Gol prostrated himself before the graves.

"Father and Mother, I have come back. Forgive this unfilial son who failed to please you even once while you were alive.... Now I have found a brilliant leader who will guide me...." He said this inwardly to his dead parents as he wiped his cheeks with his sleeve. The evening glow reflected on the Bloody River, as bloody red as in the legend.

Hong Jun Gol spent a few days finding out what the people in the surrounding area who had once served in the Righteous Volunteers Army were doing.

On the fifth day he left home. First, he decided to visit a man called Commander Chu Pung, who was living in Pyongpung-gol, some five *ri* away from the far end of Chang-gol. As he came nearer to Pyongpung-gol, Hong Jun Gol became very worked up, as old memories surged in on him.

Chu Pung had fought well as the commander of a small Righteous Volunteers Army unit, and Hong Jun Gol had served under him for some time before the unit broke up. Chu Pung had been a platoon leader in the Royal Guards regiment in Seoul in the last years of the Li dynasty. When the Japanese forcibly disbanded the Korean army in 1907, he joined his colleagues in revolt and fought against Japanese troops. Unable to hold out in the unequal fight, he took refuge in the mountains and joined up with the Righteous Volunteers Army. Later when most of the RVA units fizzled out, he led a unit and gave battle to the Japanese garrison forces from the depths of the high mountains in the Yangdok and Maengsan areas. When the leaders of the RVA unit in which Hong Jun Gol served took flight to Chientao and the unit dispersed in all directions, he stayed out with ten or so steadfast colleagues and, later, took them to Chu Pung. But Chu Pung's unit, too, had been in bad shape for months, pursued by the vicious Japanese "punitive force"; wandering in the mountains they could not so much as fight. At last, the unit was encircled and starved out. One dark night the unit managed to break out, losing half their force. Chu Pung tearfully told to his men that it was all up with them and declared the unit dissolved.

The memory hurt Hong Jun Gol bitterly. He hurried on. Being such a man, Chu Pung would be ready to take the road of the independence movement opened up by Kim Hyong Jik, should he be informed of it, Hong Jun Gol wondered.

A few years ago when he had dropped in at home, Hong Jun Gol had paid a visit to Chu Pung. He was staying with a peasant, one of his men from the RVA. He had welcomed Hong Jun Gol, but he looked worn and tired, lacking the spark of the old days. There was a pile of books in oilpaper covers in his room. He smiled wryly as he said he spent his time reading, subsisting with the help of his former soldiers in the neighbourhood. When he said this, his eyes flashed with suppressed anger.

Now, when he came to the farmhouse where Chu Pung had been living, Hong Jun Gol found it deserted. Children playing in the village told him that the man who had been living in the house had moved to a village across the Bloody River three years earlier. Hong Jun Gol found Chu Pung's home without difficulty. A boy of six or seven was bouncing around in the

yard, chasing a flock of chickens. Seeing a stranger enter the yard, the boy ran in through the open kitchen door, calling to his mother.

Hong Jun Gol looked dubiously at the house. It was a small hut with a room and a kitchen. Where could Chu Pung's room be? He wondered if the children had showed him the wrong house? Anyway he had to find out.

"Excuse me, might I ask you something?" called out Hong Jun Gol as gently as possible.

"Yes." The paper sliding door of the room opened and a woman a little over 30 appeared quietly. The boy ran up to her and grabbed folds of her skirt.

"Could you please tell me where Mr. Son Jong Min is living?"

Son Jong Min was Chu Pung's real name which he had gone back to when he came to this part of the country.

"Why, this is his home," answered the woman with searching glance at the stranger. Hong Jun Gol gazed abstractedly on his hostess for a moment, and then again ran a scrutinizing glance over the hut. It had no outhouse or guest room. What could all this mean? he wondered.

"Is he home?" stammered Hong Jun Gol.

"Yes," answered the woman, "but he's out in the fields right now.... Please wait a minute."

The woman took the boy by the hand and went out of the twig gate dragging her bast sandals. Hong Jun Gol remained standing absent-mindedly for a while, when he was struck with the idea that Chu Pung might have brought his family here to live together.

This was probable. Hong Jun Gol had heard that he had a wife and children at his native place in Kangwon Province.

Hong Jun Gol sat down plump on the earthen bank under the eaves. He looked round the yard and saw a plough, a hoe and a fork lying round, and a stack of old millet stalks in a corner of the yard. It seemed that Chu Pung was farming. The thought crossed his mind that he might have given up all hope and settled down to family life.

Now Hong Jun Gol felt all his body go limp, as the great hopes with which he had set out to make this call drained away. He felt chilled inside. This was something he had hardly expected. The whole world might change, he'd thought but how could Chu Pung retire like this? The very

thought of it left him nonplussed, though he still hoped that he might have got it wrong.

As he sat there listlessly, he heard footsteps on the other side of the fence. He looked up and saw a man approaching the twig gate taking the boy by the hand. At first glance he hardly recognized this man in peasant dress, yet the man was undoubtedly Chu Pung. Coming into the yard, Chu Pung, too, seeming to recognize Hong Jun Gol, stopped short his face trifle flushed. He was rather confused. He let go of the boy's hand and said, "Go to mother and play." Then he came nearer across the yard, saying:

"What wind brings you here, Mr. Hong?!"

But the host looked more worried than pleased. Although Hong Jun Gol took the hand Chu Pung held out awkwardly, he was quite disappointed and disillusioned to see this shabby, miserable-looking man.

"How are you?" he barely uttered the words of greeting.

The host and guest sat down facing each other in the narrow room. Chu Pung put a tobacco pouch and ashtray before the guest and offered him a smoke. But right from the start the two felt awkward and reserved, each studying the other's face.

"I haven't seen you for such a long time," said Chu Pung.

"Well, I have been held up by one thing or another."

Their conversation was strained and broken up by long silences. The books piled up in the corner of the room were covered with a thick film of dust. A half-torn book lay on the floor. Chu Pung's face was emaciated and his eyes had lost their keenness. Hong Jun Gol could see no trace of the old dignity and valour of his old RVA commander.

Wearing a sword and shouldering a gun, Chu Pung had been a dignified commander as upright and unbending as bamboo. His fearless eyes had flashed like lightning, and when he raised them, his eyelashes would stand to inspire a shuddering awe. Even at first glance, Chu Pung's appearance had given an impression of fierce militancy, dignity and character. But why this change? Because of the hard times? But how could a man change so? Hong Jun Gol's heart sank.

"I went to the house where you used to live, and I was told that you had moved here," said Hong Jun Gol casually in reply to some remarks made by Chu Pung.

"I moved here in the autumn of the year when you vis-

ited me."

"Did you?"

There was another silence. The two kept puffing at their pipes, and the room was heavy with smoke. The host was no longer embarrassed or ill at ease. He looked vacantly out of the door at the chicks following the hen to peck at feed.

"I was driven to a dead end," stuttered Chu Pung as if talking to himself. Hong Jun Gol turned his sharp eyes on Chu Pung.

"I couldn't go on living on others indefinitely," continued Chu Pung. "Moreover, I always worried and troubled my old colleagues around here. I am an able-bodied man, how could I sponge on others in the vain hope that the situation might improve, when I know our country's doom is sealed?" he paused with a sigh, turning his eyes away.

Suddenly Hong Jun Gol felt something hot come up to his throat. The words: "Our country's doom is sealed" made him really angry.

"What do you mean, sir?" he almost shouted. "You mean you think it's all up with us now? Is that it?"

Chu Pung darted a glance at Hong Jun Gol, and again turned away.

"A dark world has come, heaven and earth are all dark now," Chu Pung said quietly; he seemed not to care about the excited young man.

"Do you mean then, that you have given up and broken away from the independence movement for good?" demanded Hong Jun Gol in a sharper voice. Chu Pung remained silent for a while. His face seemed to contract a little.

"The greatest blunder I've ever made is... that I survived the last battle and didn't kill myself on the night that I dissolved my unit," his tone was as calm as ever, though his voice shook.

"It's cowardly, cowardly of you," Hong Jun Gol gasped out, pale with anger.

"What? Cowardly? Try saying that again," shouted Chu Pung in a husky voice, turning abruptly towards Hong Jun Gol. Their angry, flaming eyes met. Suddenly Chu Pung's voice and looks reminded of his old self and this angered Hong Jun Gol still more.

"Oh, yes. I'll say it a hundred times. You're cowardly. Why kill yourself? Why shrink back?"

Chu Pung sprang to his feet. So did Hong Jun Gol. They glared at each other, their eyes flashing. But Chu Pung was the first to calm down. He groaned painfully and sat down.

"You must be careful of your language. Do you think that in the present hopeless situation, you will find a way out by shouting and acting recklessly?"

Chu Pung said this, controlling himself with an effort. Now Hong Jun Gol thought he had gone too far, and also took his seat again.

"How can you say the situation is hopeless? You must see it correctly."

"Seeing it correctly, how do you think you'll find an answer?" retorted Chu Pung, apparently making light of Hong Jun Gol's contention. Hong Jun Gol remained silent for a while, reflecting. Should I tell Chu Pung or not? Will it be any use passing on Kim Hyong Jik's great ideas to this deserter? Yet I had better tell him. Then if he wants to, he can rot. I don't care. He said proudly:

"Our independence movement has great prospects now."

"Great prospects?"

Chu Pung was doubtful. This made Hong Jun Gol hotter.

"Yes. The current internal and external situation shows...," he started confidently, but he was stuck for the next word, he did not know what to say and how.

"They are now carrying on a war in Europe. But when it is over, something will happen," he spoke incoherently, and again words failed him.

"Something will happen? What on earth do you mean by that?" asked Chu Pung, bewildered. Hong Jun Gol was irritated. What a dull head I have got! He blamed his own thickheadedness. Until a while ago, on his way here, he had thought the gist of Kim Hyong Jik's speech at the meeting and his additional remarks made at their parting were clear to him. But, now, as he was going to explain them, he did not know what to say, and his head was spinning.

"That...that means they will fight another dogfight."

His words were inconsistent again. He was angry at himself.

"I simply can't make head or tail of what you're saying," Chu Pung turned away, disappointed.

Angry with himself for his ignorance and stupidity, Hong Jun Gol sat and collected his thoughts. Even now Kim Hyong Jik's great ideas were flowing through his vibrat-

ing blood-vessels; they were alive in the heart beating against his ribs. They were clear to him, as if he touched them with his whole being and saw them before his eyes. Yet when it came to explaining, he felt completely at a loss. He would gladly have cut open his body and poured out Kim Hyong Jik's ideas before the doubting Commander Chu Pung. But that was of course impossible. Hong Jun Gol spoke slowly, painstakingly picking his words, weighing each one with care in his endeavour to give the man a bare outline, even of Kim Hyong Jik's ideas. But the longer he spoke, the more Chu Pung looked bored. Occasionally he cast an amused look at the young man. At last Hong Jun Gol gave up. He realized that he was not capable of explaining. What was more, he saw that it was useless to go on talking to Chu Pung. He was disappointed and looked out at the yard.

Chu Pung's wife walked into the yard carrying something on her head, and the boy, calling his father, ran into the room and sat down on his father's knee. Hong Jun Gol said a few nothings to wind up the conversation.

"Thanks anyhow, ha, ha, ha. I thank you for your coming all the way here to take me along the right path. But, Mr. Hong, let's drop the subject for the present. But since you have come to see me, stay here with me for a few days, be a friend to a lonely man. Wife, bring us something to eat, will you?" As he called to his wife in the kitchen, Chu Pung appeared rather gentle and amiable.

Hong Jun Gol was ready to stand up resolutely and say good-bye. But on second thought he refrained, for that would be too ill-mannered. So, he sat down to table with Chu Pung and ate a few spoonfuls of flat rice, before he bade a cool farewell.

Looking gloomily at the gurgling stream, Hong Jun Gol walked on. What's the good of trying to persuade that kind of man, he asked himself. Deciding to give the man up as hopeless, he hurried on his way.

He thought it would be much better to spend his time on the old comrades who still stuck to their colours and the staunch patriotic youths and give them training than to waste time trying to persuade Commander Chu Pung.

CHAPTER III

A LUXURIANT SEASON

1

An owl was hooting in a bush on Mt. Ponghwa-san. A full moon hung over Maekjon ferry, shedding its tender light on the river, fields and mountains and the village.

Kim Hyong Jik was walking down the road beside a barley field in the moonlit Maekjon plain. He was hatless, dressed in light clothes of ramie. The barley was already waist-high. There had been a rain a few days earlier, and the crops and even the trees and grass were growing thick.

After meditating a while he stopped and turned his eyes towards distant fields, and then looked towards Naedong village and Mt. Ponghwa-san. The chestnuts were in bloom on the side of the mountain, and now and then their scent wafted over on the light night breeze, a flavour of luxuriant summer.

It's already summer, Kim Hyong Jik thought suddenly. The day before he left Mangyongdae he had looked down from Mangyong-bong Hill, at the Taedong-gang River, his son on his knee; there had been just a few azalea buds on the sunny side of the hill.

The spring had been unusually short.

Kim Hyong Jik was deeply moved as he looked at the green fields and mountains slumbering peacefully in the soft moonlight.

His comrades were as active around the country and abroad as was the summer here. He had received reports from them in the last few days.

Kim Sok Ha in Kyongsang Province was the first to send a messenger. As usual, he was working very vigorously.

After the Pyongyang meeting, Kim Sok Ha had left for

home. When the train was through the long Mt. Kumo-san tunnel and into Kyongsang Province, he got off and was soon at work. It was reported that he had already made a round of Sangju, Kimchon, Taegu, Andong, Kyongju and Pohang, most of North Kyongsang Province, and rallied more than ten comrades.

When he dispatched his messenger, he was planning to go on to South Kyongsang Province. Then word came that he had also gone to Cholla Province, where he met the comrade whom Kang Jin Sok had mentioned and that he was now very active there as well.

This news was followed by a message from Maeng Gyong Jae in Seoul. He said that everything was all right, though he had had some difficulties, for not long ago, Song Se Ho, who had returned to Seoul from abroad, had been preaching dependence on foreign forces to the independence fighters. He added that his work was now progressing more smoothly, because Kang Jin Sok was helping him in Seoul.

There was also a code letter from Commander Won Dong Yu in far-off West Chientao. It read that his unit had grown and their arms were being modernized; that he was now energetically implanting Kim Hyong Jik's great independence idea in his men and in the masses and the independence fighters in the adjacent border areas. His only problem was that many units stationed near Linkiang in West Chientao, including Cha Go Ryun's were incorrigibly conservative so that it was hard to get on closer terms with them.

Kim Hyong Jik was now on his way home after seeing off the messenger from Pak Yun Hwan in Hwanghae Province. They were said to have already recruited new comrades in the more important areas in the province, who had begun to educate the masses full steam.

Pak Yun Hwan had pulled in the headmaster and all the teaching staff at the community school in Unryul where he worked. They were now teaching the students Kim Hyong Jik's idea of *Chiwon* bringing them up to be the future pillars of the independence movement. Kim Hyong Jik thought the activity in Hwanghae Province was most satisfactory and promising, thanks to his brother-in-law's dynamic work and Pak Yun Hwan's coolness.

Pang In Su and Cho Pil U were also doing a good job in Pyongyang. Kim Hyong Jik had already been to Pyongyang

on a number of occasions to guide them. Work had gone very smoothly among the teachers and students in the town especially since he had drawn Mr. O into the organization.

Kim Hyong Jik was now awaiting the reports from Hong Jun Gol in Songchon and Pang In Su in Mangyongdae. He had asked Pang In Su to visit the areas in his charge—Anju, Sunchon, Kaechon—and Songchon and find out how things were going there. He was expecting Pang in a day or two.

His comrades had certainly carried out energetic activities in a single season. As a result, many new comrades in many areas who had joined hands with them were at this moment exerting themselves to put Kim Hyong Jik's new plan into practice. This filled him with deep emotion and great pride in his work.

"I must go and see them," he said to himself over and over as he walked slowly on, mentally going over his plans. As he was receiving reports from active comrades, he felt keenly that he should go to them and help. His comrades did not accent their difficulties in their reports, yet he could read between the lines that these were many, that their work was often hard. And, carrying out an entirely new policy, they might inadvertently deviate in implementing it. So it was high time that he went to look things over and help them.

That day Kim Hyong Jik had closed the school for a special 15-day holiday. The school guild had decided on it so that the children could help their parents in the busy farming seasons.

On Kim Hyong Jik's advice, Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and several other school guild members had planted maize for the very first time in Kangdong County. Right from the sowing, Kim Hyong Jik had gone to the fields to teach them its idiosyncrasies. Now it was waist-high. At odd moments he would go out to the field and show how to manure this growing crop, how to plough between the rows to weed and pile up the earth. He intended to start on his journey as soon as he had received Pang In Su's report.

Kim Hyong Jik was walking along quickly, skirting Mt. Ponghwa-san. When he reached the entrance to the village, he saw the shadow of a man coming in the opposite direction. The man was walking hurriedly, before he stopped short, and called out, delighted, "Mr. Kim!"

"Ah, you've come." Very pleased, Kim Hyong Jik went up

to Pang In Su and clasped his hands.

"I went to your lodging, but you were not in, so...," said Pang In Su.

"I've just been out to get some fresh air," said Kim Hyong Jik, and then asked Pang: "How are your family, are they well?"

"Yes, they are all right. But it must be very inconvenient for you here in a strange place."

"No, I'm getting on as well as at home; the kindly village folk take care of me. Well, and how is Hong in Chang-gol?"

"He is in high spirits, full of vigour. I stayed at his place last night. When I told him I was on my way here to report to you, he said he would come with me. But this morning when I was ready to start, he was in low spirits, God knows why, and told me to go on alone."

"Why?" asked Kim Hyong Jik looking at Pang's oval face which looked shrewd. The story sounded rather odd.

"He said he was so eager to see you that he felt like running all the way; but that he had not the courage to come because he had failed in his task."

"What task does he mean?"

After a moment of hesitation, Pang In Su replied:

"He entreated me not to tell you this.... He said he had been trying to learn as you had instructed him after the last meeting. But he seemed dissatisfied with the result. He said he would have a hard time of it with you if he came here now...."

"Oh lord! What a man!"

Kim Hyong Jik laughed heartily. Pang In Su also laughed, scratching the back of his head. Kim Hyong Jik said:

"Hong is such a character. He says it's easier to bend over for a caning than to study, eh?"

"He does," answered Pang.

Kim Hyong Jik laughed again and said:

"He'll take an interest in learning by and by. Well, let's go inside, Brother Pang." Kim Hyong Jik led the way. Seated facing his host, Pang In Su told him about the work he had done so far. He told how he had met the comrades active in various places for the second time to tell them about Kim Hyong Jik's ideas and to assign them their new tasks. He also gave a detailed account of how, by dint of their activities, he had been successful in recruiting many young people.

Pang In Su was not dynamic enough in work, but he was clever and sensible and he worked steadily.

When he had heard out Pang's report, Kim Hyong Jik praised him for having done so much work. Then he inquired closely about each of the comrades who had joined them; where he was and what he was doing, his personal history, his past and present inclinations and even his family. So Pang In Su had quite a hard time. Although he worked meticulously, he had not inquired into each of the new comrades that closely, so he could not give Kim Hyong Jik very detailed answers.

Kim Hyong Jik did not say much and for some moments he was again lost in thought. Then he asked how Hong Jun Gol was doing in Songchon.

"Mr. Hong is quite active, bustling about everywhere. He has been to Nyongwon, Yangdok and Maengsan, not to speak of Songchon, and he has brought more than ten people into our fold. He is in high spirits. He says he will bring those comrades to the back hill of Chang-gol and give them intensive military training when the weeding season is over."

Pang In Su was more animated as he said this than when he had reported on his own work.

"Is that so? That's splendid. Tell me more about it," said Kim Hyong Jik with a smile as if he was picturing the vigorous and ambitious Hong Jun Gol to himself. Pang In Su, however, hesitated for a few seconds for he was in no position to give a detailed account of the newly won youths; he only knew their names and addresses, nothing more. He had asked Hong Jun Gol for detailed information, for he was going to meet Kim Hyong Jik, but Hong knew little more about those people. And now Pang had to tell Kim Hyong Jik about them.

"I'm afraid Mr. Hong hasn't studied the people closely. But he says he visited his former colleagues in the RVA scattered in four counties and explained the aims of the new independence movement to them. He talked to twenty-three people in all and fourteen of them agreed. Three are from Songchon County, two from Huchi-gol in Yangdok, one from Tokjong-ri in Maengsan, two from Raengjong-ri in Nyongwon...."

Pang In Su took out a notebook from his waistcoat pocket and deciphered coded information, giving Kim Hyong Jik the names, addresses, occupations and ages of the new comrades whom Hong Jun Gol had recruited.

Kim Hyong Jik listened to Pang attentively and said:

"He has managed to win over fourteen out of the twenty-three. So that means he failed to win over the others?"

"Yes. He was indignant, saying that he had not expected that people could be that rotten."

"Rotten? Didn't he tell you about his failures?"

"Not in any detail, though he did give me a detailed account of his meeting with Commander Chu Pung who is hiding in Pyongpung-gol."

"What? You mean Commander Chu Pung is hiding in Songchon?" exclaimed Kim Hyong Jik, astonished.

"That's what he said."

"Please go on."

Pang In Su recollected for some moments what Hong Jun Gol had told him with anger. According to Pang's detailed story, when Hong had come back to Chang-gol from the Pyongyang meeting, he had gone to see Commander Chu Pung first, pinning great hopes on him, hopes which had been completely shattered.

"H'm, so that's what happened," murmured Kim Hyong Jik as Pang In Su wound up his story; he was silent for a while before he asked Pang again.

"Did he say he had explained our aims fully to Commander Chu Pung?"

"He seems to have given him some explanation, but he said Chu Pung would not listen. And Brother Hong thought that such a degenerate couldn't comprehend your great aims. So he gave up and went away, so he told me."

"What about the others? Much the same, you mean?"

"I guess so."

Kim Hyong Jik was silent again, brooding for some moments, gazing at the lamp.

"Thank you for having gone to so much trouble. Well, that is enough for today; it's very late. We will leave tomorrow. We'll go to our comrades to review our work closely and discuss what is to be done next." He got up from his seat and made a bed.

His head on a pillow, Kim Hyong Jik lay side by side with Pang In Su, but he could not sleep. It was true that his comrades had worked energetically with redoubled courage to implement the new policy and they had achieved great successes. But the messenger's reports, particularly Pang In Su's had brought

home to him that there were quite a few shortcomings and deviations in his comrades' activities. Yet these shortcomings were inevitable and could be eliminated. He felt once more that he was right to have decided to take the time to visit his comrades and help them in their work. He was planning to visit Pyongyang, Anju, Songchon and Seoul when the cock crowed.

2

Hong Jun Gol weeded the stony field all day. He was very fatigued when he finished his supper, for he had not used the hoe for years. He went over to the end-room and lay down limply, resting his head on a wooden pillow. It was more than five days since Pang In Su visited him, and still there was no news from Kim Hyong Jik.

He had to meet an old colleague in Sobaek, Nyongwon, and he felt the urge to go there right away, but yet he waited patiently for news. Staying at home and doing nothing made his whole body ache. So he weeded his elder brother's millet field. His brother and sister-in-law did not know what he was thinking, and were happy in the belief that Jun Gol was now going to settle down at home. His nephews were still happier, thinking their nice uncle would now live with them, and they were always at his heels.

Weeding the millet field, Jun Gol would now and then straighten up and look towards the Chang-gol road, hoping for a messenger.

Now, looking at the flickering lamp, he thought to himself: "I'm sure he'll come tomorrow...." After the Pyongyang meeting, he had received two books from Kim Hyong Jik, which he had wrapped in a bundle. When he was passing through the town of Kangdong on his way here, he remembered that his brother had used a torch in a niche, so he bought a china lamp and a bottle of kerosene.

As he was gazing at the lamplight, Hong Jun Gol suddenly remembered and sat up abruptly with a grimace. He unwrapped his bundle and took out two books, each of them as thick as his

palm, and looked at them. They were covered with thick oil paper and had no titles. Fumbling at them for a few days, he had found out that they were history books.

He gazed at the books, and heaved a deep sigh.

Then he smiled bitterly remembering the old tale about a farmer who had been made to study classics as a child. One day, as he was ploughing his field, he was heard threatening his disobedient ox: "If you don't keep moving, you damned beast, I'll send you to school to study the Great Learning (one of the Four Books of Confucian Classics—*Tr.*). Hong Jun Gol thought that if he had met Kim Hyong Jik this time, he would have heard his comments on his activities and received new assignments. However, he durst not go and see him because he had not managed to study properly. As he thought of this, he was very cross with himself.

He had resolved that while he waited for the message, he would at least read the two books even if he didn't understand them properly. But, God knows why, as soon as he picked up a book, his whole body seemed to ache and he became terribly sleepy.

Maybe he had started studying too late—he had no educational grounding—or maybe he was born muddleheaded. At any rate, he thought, it would take him a whole lifetime to master those two books. For the last three nights he had made up his mind time and again and read if not the whole first volume, at least a dozen or so pages. But he had no clear idea of what he had read so far.

Hong Jun Gol gave such a deep sigh that the floor sank. Yet as he thought of Kim Hyong Jik's earnest advice and his profound care for him, he felt he should not give up trying.

Last autumn when Kim Hyong Jik had dressed his wound at his house, he had told Hong that he must study if he was to engage in the independence movement in the future. Despite the many claims of his work, Kim Hyong Jik had made time every day to teach him how to write, had held Hong's hand in his and helped him write one character after another. This was how he had been enlightened. As he thought of those unforgettable days, he felt that he had to keep up his reading even if it took his whole life to master just these two books. And yet, as soon as he sat down to it, his determination would fade and he would only sit and sigh. Hong Jun Gol had the courage to rush enemy positions with a bomb, would do it right

this minute, if he was ordered to. He did not yet understand that learning was a far more important weapon in the fight against the Japs.

He opened the page he had turned up last night and resumed his reading.

"...We have no direct diplomatic relations even with neighbouring countries; foreigners act for us. That is because we lost our country...."

Hong Jun Gol tried to grasp the meaning of what he had read. It was a passage from the manifesto by the commander of a RVA unit denouncing the treacherous "Ulsa Treaty". Hong did not know what diplomatic relations were or how important they were for a country, yet it seemed to him that this would affect his country's destiny. He rose from his seat and took a pencil out of the pocket of his jacket, which was hanging on a hook. The pencil was no longer than his finger. He had bought it at a general store in Kangdong. He had sharpened it three days before when he started his study. And it was so short now: He had marked the margins, put a line against each passage for they all seemed very important.

He reread the line he had just finished word by word, and marked it. The point broke off his pencil.

"Il Ryong," Hong called his eldest nephew, turning towards the sliding door. His nephew had been sitting with his elbow resting on the threshold, as on the previous night, watching his uncle. "Shall I bring the knife, uncle?" the boy asked, smiling slyly.

Hong Jun Gol smiled awkwardly looking at his nephew who had an unkempt hair. He said, "Yes, bring it. What a clever urchin...." The boy was off to the kitchen without waiting for an answer. He had had his eye on the pencil from the very first day. Already nine, he was completely unlettered. Hong thought of asking Kim Hyong Jik to admit the boy to Myongsin School later on, but he hesitated, because he was sorry to trouble the teacher while he was not giving him any substantial help.

The boy brought a big kitchen knife. Having sharpened the pencil, Hong Jun Gol resumed his reading. The book went on:

"...If we, with our own territory and people, fail...to govern, if we allow foreigners to rule, that means that we have no national...national sovereignty.... If we lose our country, our sovereignty, all the people in this land of 3,000 *ri* are

destined to be slaves. And slavery is worse than death...." Hong Jun Gol went on reading, marking sentence after sentence.

His nephew who was again sitting on the floor, leaning against the doorway looked up at him and said: "You've got a lot of books, uncle."

Hong Jun Gol awoke from his deep concentration and, gazing at his nephew, said with a smile, "Yes, you're right."

"Haven't you got a gun?" the boy asked abruptly.

"What do you mean by gun?"

"Have you exchanged your gun for the books?"

The boy's black wild-grape eyes flashed with curiosity.

"What are you talking about?" asked Hong, taken aback.

"Granny used to tell me you were fighting the Japs with a gun."

"Granny?..."

This was all Hong Jun Gol could say and he stared at his nephew. The boy's eyes reminded slightly of his grandmother. Hong nodded, saying nonchalantly:

"Yes, you're right. Be off to bed now...."

The boy hesitated for a few seconds, then he went to the warmer part of the room where his younger brothers were asleep, and lay down between them.

That night Hong Jun Gol turned over the leaves of the book with all the will power and patience he could muster. When he had read as much as on the three previous days, he heard the cock flapping its wings. His head ached and he felt utterly exhausted. He shut the book and went to bed. He had thought he would sleep like the dead, but now in his bed he could not fall asleep. He was anxious to hear from Kim Hyong Jik: he wanted to know what he would say about his activities. If Kim Hyong Jik did not give him a new task, if he had no objection, he would like to go, even tomorrow, to Sobaek of Nyongwon County and several other places to increase the number of the comrades to twenty. He would like to call them up in the slack farming season and give them intensive military training. As he thought of this, he could hardly repress his excitement, and was no longer tired or sleepy.

He lit a cigarette and went out of the house. The night was nearly over, and day was dawning over Chang-gol. The rugged mountains around the village soared high like a picture

drawn in stone ink. The village was quiet, slumbering still. Only the Bloody River murmured plaintively. He walked slowly along the main road towards the river. At the riverside he came to a halt. He saw a shadow on the bank downstream. Hong thought some hard-working villager might be going to the field. The approaching man stopped, too.

"Who is it?" asked Hong.

"Isn't that Brother Hong?" the man asked in a pleased tone. The voice was familiar. Judging from his small and slender build, it must be Pang In Su.

"Hello! What brings you here?" Hong hurried towards him.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik has come," said Pang.

"Has he?" Hong Jun Gol showed the liveliest surprise and looked over Pang's shoulders.

"He is in the hut on the back hill now," said Pang In Su, looking towards the Bloody River. The dark blue mountain peaks around the village looked august and high against the lightening sky.

"Let's go."

Hong Jun Gol walked quickly, leading Pang. At the end of the mountain there was an old hut which the Righteous Volunteers had earlier used to defend the gateway to the village.

"But why did he make this dangerous night journey?" asked Hong Jun Gol, as they went up the river bank.

Pang In Su replied, "I suggested stopping somewhere overnight, but he preferred to walk at night and insisted on going on, so I...."

The two men walked on in silence for some moments, Hong Jun Gol thinking Pang had not taken enough care of Kim Hyong Jik and in his heart he was reproving his companion.

"He has come here straight from Kaechon County," Pang In Su explained.

"From Kaechon County? That's a very long way from here!" Hong was thunderstruck. He thought to himself: "It's more than 250 *ri* from here. And what did he go there for? I don't understand. He must have met Pang In Su at Naedong only a short time ago, and how could he go to the distant Kaechon and still reach the far end of Songchon today?"

Pang In Su looked at the amazed Hong Jun Gol. His well-featured, intelligent face showed that he was filled with indescribable emotion. But he just urged Hong on, now leading

the way himself.

The two men went up the foot of the mountain opposite Chang-gol, whose crest was the main peak of Mt. Ryongma-san.

Kim Hyong Jik was seated by a fire in front of the hut.

Hong Jun Gol said apologetically:

"You shouldn't have troubled to come all the way here, sir.... If you had only sent me word, I would have come to see you."

"Ha, ha, ha.... What are you talking about? I enjoy the landscape here too. Isn't every mountain and river in Pyongan Province beautiful?" And Kim Hyong Jik burst out laughing, looking at Pang In Su as if seeking his agreement.

He looked a little thinner, but as vigorous as ever.

He said: "I'm sorry I'm late. You must have been waiting anxiously for news. I'm late because I stopped off in several places and I'm rather slow at walking."

"Why, I never thought you would come here yourself," said Hong Jun Gol.

Kim Hyong Jik asked, "Well, how are your brother's family? The children are growing up well, I hope? By the way, you said you have three nephews?"

"Yes, they are fine," replied Hong, thinking to himself: "What a good memory he has! He asked me about my family the other day, and still remembers about my nephews."

"Sir, let's go down to my house although it's humble," invited Hong Jun Gol rising from his seat.

"Thank you. But I prefer to stay here. I have settled in this hut, and it is nice up here! You have a beautiful mountain and wood here and a stream runs down the valley. You even have this lovely hut here, ha, ha, ha.... Now, sit down."

"You are settled here?!" Hong Jun Gol was taken aback, and so was Pang In Su. Again Hong Jun Gol entreated earnestly:

"Oh, please, don't say that. Let us go to my place. We have got a room for you, though it is humble...."

"Brother Hong, don't press Mr. Kim so hard. We are sorry we aren't in a position to offer him a decent lodging at our place; I know how you feel. Let him stay here as he has chosen. We each of us must build up the districts in our charge, so that we can offer him a decent and safe place, no matter when he comes to see us. But we are not yet in a position to do so, are we?" said Pang In Su. He was quite right, and

Hong Jun Gol stopped.

"Don't worry about my safety. When we think of the hardships we will have to face, we must realize that right now we are living in clover. In the old days only well-to-do sightseers could enjoy the landscape in this wonderful season, ha, ha, ha.... Sit down, Hong. Let's have something to eat; the water is boiling. Will you take out the lunch pail, Brother Pang? It was kindly prepared by our comrades in Sunchon yesterday when we left."

Kim Hyong Jik seemed in high spirits as Pang In Su got out the dinner pail. It was filled with appetizing millet cakes coated with powdered red beans. The three breakfasted together.

When they had eaten Pang In Su bade farewell to Kim Hyong Jik and set out on his journey. Kim Hyong Jik remained standing on the ridge of Mt. Ryongma-san, and Pang gazed at his leader for many moments with profound emotion, before he said:

"Brother Hong, I have to leave now, because I have been given an urgent task by Mr. Kim. I leave him in your care—I'm sure you will take good care of him, yet I don't feel easy."

"Don't worry, Brother Pang," was Hong Jun Gol's reply.

Hong was sure he would take good care of Kim Hyong Jik yet he felt the weight of responsibility the more keenly, when he heard Pang's earnest words.

"I believe you will," Pang said. "Yet I'm asking you like this because.... Oh, well, if you attend on him for a few days, you will understand my feelings...."

Pang's words sounded rather incoherent.

"Has anything happened?" Hong Jun Gol asked suspiciously. Pang In Su nodded, staring at Hong with meaningful eyes, still holding the hand of his friend's in his own.

"I'll tell you about it later. But, for the present, I'd like to tell you just one thing, Brother Hong...."

"What is it?" Hong Jun Gol asked anxiously.

"I think I will never forget these five days I've spent with him since we left the Naedong village on our visits. When he explained his new policy for the independence movement in Pyongyang, we cheered and went off to carry it out. We thought we had understood it all, yet, we are still far from understanding his great aims."

"But, Brother Pang, if such an intelligent man as you is

hazy about his aims, how can an ignoramus like me...." Hong said what he really felt. For though he had not been at school with Kim Hyong Jik, Pang In Su had been under his guidance since his middle-school days.

Pang In Su resumed his story.

"Knowledge is not what matters here.... Brother Hong, this is what happened. After he left Naedong five days ago, he visited the comrades active in Pyongan Province. I can't tell all about that. When he met all the comrades in Kaechon, he referred to a certain Chon, at the township community school, who had been a well-known activist in the patriotic enlightenment movement, and asked me whether he was still working at the same school."

Hong Jun Gol only watched Pang's face, not knowing what to expect.

"I answered drily: 'I had a plan to see him, but I found out that he had gone back to his native township of Raengchon after his school was closed down and he had spent several months in prison. He was said to have given up the cause and to be teaching at a public elementary school set up by the Japs. So I gave up the idea of meeting him.' Then Mr. Kim asked me how I knew for sure that he had really degenerated; and he questioned me about him to the minutest details. I hadn't thought of making such detailed inquiries because the mere mention of him turned my stomach. Mr. Kim proposed that we go to see him."

"To see such a man?"

"Yes. Chon lives more than 150 *ri* away from the township and we had to take a dangerous mountain path to get there. And as you know, it rains all summer on the Chongchongang River. It was raining that day, too. So I suggested that I should go and see him myself later, but he wouldn't listen. Then I suggested that we start the next day when the rain let up, but he wouldn't agree, for his every minute and second is precious because he intends to go to Seoul and back, all within 15 days."

"So he went to see the chap?" demanded Hong Jun Gol.

"In spite of the cold rain, he walked on till midnight and at last reached the place. Words baffle me to describe what happened then; how Chon was confused, how Mr. Kim had a heart-to-heart talk with him for a whole day and night, how at the dawn of the next day the man knelt down in front of

Mr. Kim, shedding tears...."

"Is that true?" asked Hong Jun Gol, saucer-eyed. Pang In Su smiled and went on.

"Mr. Kim has come here straight from there. He said to me: 'A comrade is more precious to the revolutionary movement than a ton of gold.' "

"Really?" Hong Jun Gol murmured, shaken.

"Well, I must leave now, so good-bye, Brother Hong." Pang In Su looked tenderly at Mt. Ryongma-san where Kim Hyong Jik was staying, and went off.

Looking at Pang In Su's back disappearing into the thicket, Hong Jun Gol still felt as if his heart was weighed down by a heavy burden. Shaking his head, he turned round and walked up the hill.

Kim Hyong Jik was standing silhouetted against the General's Hill bright in the morning glow, looking down into the valley. He looked over his shoulder when he heard Hong coming back.

"Nature is beautiful yet august here, so legends have arisen about this place. Is that the General's Sword, that huge stone standing in the middle of the field down there?"

"Have you been to our place before, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha.... I read about it in a book. Where is the General's Hill?"

Kim Hyong Jik raised his head and looked at the steep mountain peaks.

"Over there where the sun is rising," said Hong Jun Gol pointing at a peak right opposite them.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at the peak for a while and said:

"It does look like the General who beheaded the Black Dragon with a single stroke. That mountain ridge opposite us which ends on the riverside must be Black Dragon Mountain.... It is a black dragon, indeed. As the river reflects the morning glow, it looks like a stream of blood flowing out of the Black Dragon's neck."

He was lost in excitement, looking at the sky, the mountain peaks and the valley for a long time. As he looked at his native landscape and heard what Kim Hyong Jik had said, Hong Jun Gol felt his heart warm. Then Kim Hyong Jik came to him, calling: "Brother Hong".

Hong Jun Gol looked at his handsome face.

"I would like to stay here at Chang-gol for a few days;

the whole landscape here is so fascinating."

"For a few days?" asked Hong.

Resting his hand gently on Hong's shoulder, Kim Hyong Jik answered.

"Yes, I am going to study with you for three days in this hut on Mt. Ryongma-san, Brother Hong."

"To study?!" exclaimed Hong Jun Gol, surprised at this unexpected answer.

"Ha, ha, ha.... Why are you so surprised? Reading books, catching their meaning, raising problems and discussing them —that is study."

Hong Jun Gol blinked his eyes, dazed. Hong couldn't quite understand. He wondered inwardly: "What has he in mind? Why did he come here? To study with me? That really isn't possible, not in the present situation, where he carries the destiny of the independence movement on his shoulders and it has just made a new stride forward. Maybe he is going to see how far I have got with the books he gave me last time."

Hong was at a loss what to say.

"Well, let's sit down here and talk." Kim Hyong Jik sat on a patch of grass. Hong Jun Gol sat down beside him.

"Why are you so embarrassed?" asked Kim Hyong Jik looking at Hong with his gentle smiling eyes. "Do you find it so very hard to study?"

"No, sir, but...." Hong was perplexed.

"Then you think it isn't right to study now because we are too busy?"

"Yes... no, I don't mean but...." Hong Jun Gol only hesitated, trying to avoid the question.

"Ha, ha, ha.... Well, let me hear your views, Brother Hong, speak out."

Kim Hyong Jik's informal manner emboldened Hong Jun Gol.

"Last autumn you helped me learn to read and write. Since then I've tried to read your books at spare moments but...." Here he got stuck up.

"But what?"

"But I'm afraid that by nature I'm no good at study," said Hong Jun Gol abruptly.

"What are you talking about?" Kim Hyong Jik surprised.

"I only read a few pages of the books you gave me last

autumn before I gave up reading.... As for the books you gave me last time I read at one of them for three whole nights, but I've barely managed to read more than 60 pages. I was born thickheaded, and on top of that I started learning late.... So, I would like you to make it this way, sir," pleaded Hong Jun Gol, looking up at the leader.

"How?" asked back Kim Hyong Jik.

"If I start studying now, I don't think I will be able to finish the books you gave me by the end of my life; not even if I spend all my time reading them. If I do try, I don't think I'll either work or study properly. Excuse me for being so forward, but I'm ready to do any other thing you assign me.... I am even ready to jump into a fire with a bundle of hay."

Now that he had got it off his chest, Hong Jun Gol felt relieved. Kim Hyong Jik watched Hong's earnest expression closely, before he answered gently:

"Do you really find it so hard to study?"

"Yes,..." Hong replied frankly, bowing his head.

Kim Hyong Jik turned his eyes silently towards the General's Hill. He looked thoughtful for some moments, then he again faced Hong:

"Brother Hong, to do that, you need knowledge, and that means you must study. Our independence movement cannot take a single step forward without knowledge."

Hong Jun Gol looked at him blankly.

"To put it in a nutshell" Kim Hyong Jik went on calmly, "Our independence movement must awaken and rally all our patriots and all the 20 million Koreans to fight for our great goal. We must lead them along the right road, to achieve independence through their own efforts. Isn't this right?" Kim Hyong Jik looked at Hong Jun Gol inquiringly.

"Yes,..." Hong faltered.

"If we are to do that, we must first teach people our great aim, our ideas, we must show them the road ahead, implant it all deep in their minds, arm them with our ideas. So we, who are their teachers, must grasp those ideas. How, otherwise, can we carry out our task?"

"You are quite right, sir. But how can I do all that? The only thing I know is how to shoot. So I would like to gather young folks who want to join in the independence movement and make necessary preparations, and when you call on me, I'll fight the enemy, and stake my life."

"You are wrong, Brother Hong," Kim Hyong Jik said earnestly.

"Am I?"

"Suppose you build up an armed unit of a few people, as you say. And suppose you succeed in rallying a group of young men by your vigorous activity. Even forming an armed unit of young people, it is not enough just to teach them how to shoot."

Hong Jun Gol stared questioningly at Kim Hyong Jik.

"Our independence movement cannot succeed in a day or two just because we rise up in arms. We have a long way to go and we must go step by step. We may walk this thorny road for our whole lives or even for generations, braving all hardship, storm and stress, going through seas of blood. But if you don't prepare your young people mentally and just give them guns to fight, it won't be long before they lose heart, their faith and hope and back out like our old army of volunteers. That was one of their most serious shortcomings. Don't you think so?"

"Yes I do...," and Kim Hyong Jik was quite right.

"But here is a more important thing: You need to know your own position. You cannot allow yourself only to build up an armed unit of only a few young people."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Think about it. How many comrades do we have in this wide land of 3,000 *ri,* while our whole country is covered with bristling forests of Japanese bayonets?"

Kim Hyong Jik stopped suddenly and turned his eyes towards the distant mountain ridges. A purple mist blew leisurely across the boundless sky. Hong Jun Gol also looked up. What Kim Hyong Jik had said touched him very near.

"There are not many, as yet...." Kim Hyong Jik said, half to himself. Then he turned to Hong.

"There are not many. We have launched our struggle with a few comrades. We have taken the first step in a hard fight, believing in our just cause and powerful truth; we have started to cut a thorny path, in the belief that before long our 20 million people will rise united with one idea."

Kim Hyong Jik's voice was rather excited. Hong Jun Gol could not express his views instantly.

"You are one of them, Brother Hong; I mean one of our

few and precious comrades, and each of us must awaken ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand people. Moreover, you must know that you must work as a leading figure in the independence movement."

"You mean me?" asked Hong Jun Gol, his eyes opening wide like saucers.

With a meaningful smile Kim Hyong Jik went on.

"Who is the master of the country? Who loves the country most? It is the plowmen who labour planting rice and weeding fields under the scorching summer sun; it is fishermen who fish in the vast ocean in the teeth of furious gales and waves; it is the miners who dig up iron ore many fathoms underground; it is the toiling masses who work to feed and clothe the population. Look back on our history. It was the aristocratic flunkeys who surrendered to the enemy, who sold out our country; it was they and all the rich who did not hesitate to collaborate with our foreign foes for personal prosperity and pomp. Isn't that so? They do it because even if the country is in ruins, they can preserve their wealth and power. On the other hand, if the country goes to ruin it is the working masses who are destined for slavery. Over many centuries the working people have never hesitated to shed their blood, to dedicate their lives to defend their country and preserve their history. Brother Hong, we are confident that we can succeed in our independence movement because we believe in the working people's unbreakable strength, their constancy and will. This is the fundamental difference between the former independence movement and the one that we are building."

In spite of himself Hong Jun Gol was gradually attracted by Kim Hyong Jik's argument and by his ardour. He felt as if he saw two paths marked clearly through 5,000 years of history.

"As you see, if masses are the masters of our independence movement, it is obvious that the revolutionaries who lead them must also come from among them. New revolutionaries must emerge from among the working people—from among the plowmen like yourself, Brother Hong, miners, fishermen and workers in the towns who, without a homeland, without independence, will never have an inch of land to set their foot on. They must push ahead with the independence movement, facing all kinds of hardships. That is the only way that we can win our great though difficult cause."

Hong Jun Gol was deep in thought. Now he began to understand, though still not fully, Kim Hyong Jik's great idea. He saw that he had plunged into the tough and solemn struggle and scurried round rashly. He also felt the weight of a great load on his shoulders.

"Why, is it too much for you?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, apparently reading Jun Gol's mind.

"Yes...," Hong Jun Gol answered, confused.

"And yet, you have no right to flinch from it," said Kim Hyong Jik laughing quietly. "If you just sit with your arms folded, who will do the job? Besides, I shall never allow you to back out of the struggle. I will take you along at all cost, ha, ha, ha...."

Then he changed his tone:

"Brother Hong, you can say that sort of thing while you don't understand your own situation, but once you do, I do believe, you will not scruple to stand on the sharp edge of a sword if ordered to. Well, let us take our courage in both hands and fight, helping each other. Studying is not that hard; after all, letters were invented by men.... Once you are firmly resolved, you can study and engage in the independence movement at the same time. When you get beyond the first stage, you'll find the next one much easier. So brace yourself!"

Kim Hyong Jik gripped Hong Jun Gol's shoulders with his hands. Hong's whole body felt invigorated. His heart was warmed up and fresh strength surged up in him.

"Mr. Kim!..." Hong Jun Gol cried out like a child. He was too excited to say more. Kim Hyong Jik looked at him with a friendly smile.

Hong Jun Gol studied day and night: in the daytime he would sit and read on the sunny lawn on Mt. Ryongma-san and at night beside the bonfire outside the hut, exposing himself to the cold dew. He would read books, listen to the leader and discuss the internal and external situation with him and the practical problems of the independence movement.

On the fourth and last day of his stay Kim Hyong Jik got Hong Jun Gol to take stock for himself of the merits and demerits of his work and his experience in the light of what he had studied so far. After sunset, the bonfire was lit again in front of the hut. The tin pot was hissing on the fire as it had at dawn the day Kim Hyong Jik arrived. Hong Jun Gol

talked to his leader about what he was going to do.

He studied Kim Hyong Jik's face. Hong Jun Gol felt as if during the last four days he had woken up. That day he had summed up his past work with the leader's help the whole day, and he felt ashamed because all he had done so far seemed to add up to so little. Now he began to understand how to carry out his activities.

He hit upon one idea after another: I must study at every odd moment I have, then I must visit every young man I have won over, just as Mr. Kim has visited me, and inculcate deep in their minds his far-reaching ideas and train each one of them to be a revolutionary who can work independently. He also felt that he must go to Chu Pung and to the others once again and to make tireless efforts to keep in touch with them; that he should build up the Chang-gol village as a centre of activity. Yet, he was worrying that once the teacher was away and Kim Hyong Jik leaving that very night, he might fall back into his former self, and he felt ill at ease.

Kim Hyong Jik was looking into the fire; he seemed well satisfied. After hearing out Hong Jun Gol, he raised his head and said:

"Excellent, Brother Hong. Now I have nothing more to say."

He laughed cheerfully. So did Hong Jun Gol, heaving a sigh of relief.

"Do as you said. Just one thing, though. Don't try and do it all at once; do the things one by one, concentrating your efforts. I intended to meet all those people if I had enough time. But I am sure that you will be able to do the job yourself, and I must leave and go to other places on urgent business."

"Indeed, you should have met them all. I am very afraid I won't be able to work with them well enough by myself," replied Hong Jun Gol. Having heard what Kim Hyong Jik had just said, he regretted that he had not brought Chu Pung and had him meet Kim Hyong Jik last night.

"Have confidence in yourself, Brother Hong. So long as we have a just cause and a righteous goal, there will be nothing to fear. Talk to them with sincerity, untiringly and actively. Try specially hard to do a good job with Commander Chu Pung, to get him into our fold. They say he has deserted his cause, but I don't believe it. Because when you told him he was a coward, he got angry. That shows that he is still a

patriot at heart; he is only discouraged because he doesn't know which way to turn. Let us show him. Mr. Hong, you said our independence movement will not be the loser if a man like Chu Pung stands aside, but you are wrong. In the final analysis, we all of us are a lot of individuals with a common purpose. What is more, as men we are duty bound to rescue anyone from pitfalls. If you help Chu Pung earnestly and awaken him, and succeed in persuading him to join us, you sure will draw good experience and confidence from this."

"I will remember your words and do my level best," replied Hong Jun Gol.

Kim Hyong Jik got up and came nearer to the fire.

"Don't worry, sir. I'll manage...," said Hong Jun Gol, jumping to his feet. He put the pot on the ground, took a calabash, and went down to the ravine to get some water. His conscience stung him, for in the past four days he had not looked after Kim Hyong Jik properly, had not seen to it that he rested. He had been lost in his studies, and had failed to take good care of him. As he fetched water, he told Kim Hyong Jik:

"Please sir, do come down to my place and stay there even for just one night before you leave. How can you cover more than 100 *ri* tonight?... You had a hard journey here, and I left you to sleep in the open air for four nights, and I'm really...."

"Thank you. Brother Hong, I would indeed like to stay at your house for a night to meet your brother and his wife. But our comrades in Seoul will be waiting for me now. I was supposed to be there by noon today...," Kim Hyong Jik said so apologetically that Hong Jun Gol could not try to detain him.

After supper Kim Hyong Jik began on his journey. Hong Jun Gol went with him to see him off, though he was asked not to. They parted in the middle of the night on a high summit on the border between Kangdong and Songchon. Hong Jun Gol was awfully sorry. Suddenly Hong Jun Gol fumbled in his jacket and took out a glistening metal thing.

"Please keep it with you, sir, though it's not so good...."

The dim moonlight peeping into the forest gave enough light to make out the object. It was a pistol. Kim Hyong Jik looked at it for a few seconds before he silently received it with a smile. After he had examined the pistol for a moment, he said:

"A good pistol. Thank you. Well, shall we exchange our

pistols?" Kim Hyong Jik also took out a glistening piece of ironware from his bosom, and put it out towards Hong Jun Gol.

"Why, sir...," Hong Jun Gol was confused.

"Take it. Let us exchange them in memory of our meeting."

Kim Hyong Jik put his pistol into Hong Jun Gol's hand with a smile. Looking at the pistol, Hong was quite surprised. It was a most up-to-date one far better than his.

"Sir, this is much better than...," the flurried Hong Jun Gol thrusted the pistol towards Kim Hyong Jik.

"Take it. Well, I am leaving now. Take care of yourself. Come to me any time you want."

Kim Hyong Jik was already striding down the slope. In the confusion of the moment, Hong Jun Gol could not even say proper words of farewell. Kim Hyong Jik was now out of sight, screened by the wood and Hong could only hear his footsteps fading. The footsteps rang warmly in the heart of Hong who stood there thinking, seeing off his leader.

All of a sudden Hong Jun Gol recalled what Pang In Su had said as he was leaving at the dawn of the day when Kim Hyong Jik had come to the Chang-gol village:

"Before anything else, we must make the leader's far-reaching idea part of our own selves.... He said a comrade is more precious than a ton of gold...."

These quiet words Pang In Su had uttered that day seemed to be ringing not in his ears but in his heart.

"Mr. Kim!" Hong Jun Gol exclaimed to himself.

An owl called on a distant hill. The sound of Kim Hyong Jik's footsteps had faded.

3

The train from Sinuiju pulled into Seoul Station after 10 p.m., with a loud whistle. People poured out of the carriages onto the platform. A shrill voice on the loudspeakers was telling passengers which way to go in Korean and Japanese.

Kim Hyong Jik was the last one to get off. There was a hubbub on the platform. The people who had alighted before him stood huddled up beside the train, instead of moving on

towards the pedestrian underpass. Adjusting the strings of his ramie cloth *turumagi,* he looked around cautiously. Scores of military police were lined up on the platform right to the underpass, shouting to the passengers not to move. He looked towards the head of the train to find out what was the matter.

A crowd of Japanese officials and army officers were coming down from the first-class carriage. The crowd was headed by a skinny high Japanese dignitary in bow tie and tails and a top hat that looked like a stovepipe. He sauntered along leisurely, with his cane. Right behind him came a corpulent Japanese general in shiny top boots, his cap banded with a red strap. His shoulders were decorated with gorgeous epaulettes which looked as if they had been smeared with molten gold. He was walking along in a dignified gait, belly to the fore. At each step his yellow leather sword sheath touched his glistening boot. The two were followed by an entourage of a dozen or so people in army uniforms or Western clothes, accompanied by a few mincing Jap women in kimonos and leather-soled sandals, their long hair done up in heavy coiffures.

The Japanese men and women walked arrogantly down the centre of the platform, whence the ordinary passengers had been pushed aside by shouting, glaring military police. As the party approached the crowd, the policemen stiffened, as if electrified, and raised their white-gloved hands in salute.

The passengers cast looks of hatred at the Japanese dignitaries. Kim Hyong Jik also stared at them, hardly able to suppress his surging anger. Apparently they had come back from an "inspection tour". Wherever those blackguards went, many Koreans were killed, imprisoned, plundered of their property and persecuted. Kim Hyong Jik's eyes were on the verge of emitting fire. He could well understand how the Korean patriot An Jung Gun had felt when he fired his pistol at Harbin railway station. Kim Hyong Jik closed his eyes.

"Let's just wait and see how long you swine will trample on our country like this." He shouted indignantly in his heart. There were murmurings among the people. They started to flow heavily towards the end of the platform where the dark mouth of the underpass waited to swallow them.

The ticket gate was still more congested. As the passengers began to come out, there was an uproar. Hotel guides in leather caps, rickshaw men in Japanese rubbersoled socks and shorts,

A-frame coolies, their heads tied round with towels, and even beggars were all vying to pull the passengers' sleeves. Outside, Kim Hyong Jik watched the scene dejected. His eyes caught sight of a boy standing alone at a corner some distance away from the ticket gate, the empty heavy A-frame on his shoulders bigger than the lad himself. With a plaintive look he watched the scene beside the ticket gate. He seemed to lack the courage to compete for custom.

"My! Such a young boy...."

Kim Hyong Jik felt a lump in his throat. The boy looked no more than eleven or twelve. Emaciated hands and feet stuck out of his worn-out sleeves and trouser legs, and in his dried up face only the eyes betrayed his hunger and despair.

In spite of himself Kim Hyong Jik approached the boy. He stared at him for a moment and in a quivering voice, asked:

"You want to be hired, too, my boy?"

"Oh yes, sir. Have you any luggage? I'll carry it for you."

"No, I don't mean that.... You have no parents at home?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, putting his hand on the boy's shoulders. The boy looked at him vacantly but, noticing the profound sympathy in the inquirer's face, he answered, his head bowed. "Mother is dead, and father is sick in bed. I've only got a little brother." The voice was hardly audible.

"Is this your father's A-frame?"

For answer the boy nodded.

Kim Hyong Jik's heart was choked. He stood speechless for some moments. The boy looked up at Kim Hyong Jik. There were traces of tears on his dusty cheeks. He wiped his eyes with the back of his fist. Kim Hyong Jik's hand went inside his *turumagi* and was already fumbling in the pocket of his waistcoat. He took out all the money he had. He hesitated, however; it was evident that this small amount of money could not save the boy's family from their plight. But how could he just part with this boy? Without a word, Kim Hyong Jik thrust the money into the boy's pocket. The boy did not understand what this meant and looked up at him with a wide-eyed surprise.

"Go buy medicine for your father and give him some food."

The boy was taken aback and took out the money from his pocket.

"Don't do this, sir. I can't take the money. If you have

luggage, I'll carry it for you."

"Take it, my boy. And let me know your address. I will come and see your father. Where do you live?"

After considerable effort, Kim Hyong Jik persuaded the boy to tell him where he lived. The boy bowed again and again in gratitude and departed, looking back at his benefactor several times. Grief tore at Kim Hyong Jik's heart. The boy's image appeared before him, and then the robust faces of the Japanese dignitaries walking haughtily down the platform, cracking jokes and laughing, then the uproarious rickshaw men, the A-frame coolies, agents and again the emaciated face of the young boy. The faces of the poor folks, their images, reminded him of all the Korean people languishing for lack of a means of livelihood, shackled to colonizers, a people without a country of their own.

Kim Hyong Jik looked in the direction in which the boy had disappeared; lights were flickering in the street. The Sungrye-mun Gate raised its ghostly roof into the bluish black sky, which looked as if drawn in black ink.

"Boy, you should not have to carry a load. It is we grown-ups who should carry it. And we have set out already, carrying very heavy load now. We are going to carry your load as well as the load of the whole country. Wait, my boy, wait, poor Korean boy. We'll bring you light...." Kim Hyong Jik pledged at the bottom of his heart.

Presently he started walking slowly. As he took a few steps, Maeng Gyong Jae came rushing from the opposite direction.

"I'm sorry I'm late, sir. I've only just received the telegram you sent this morning. You can't depend on those darn post offices." Maeng Gyong Jae looked dreadfully upset at being late.

"I know the way; you shouldn't have troubled to come."

With an effort Kim Hyong Jik covered up his gloomy mood and looked delighted as he shook hands with Maeng. Maeng finally took Kim Hyong Jik's bundle and guided the way. On the plaza in front of the railway station the two men got into East Gate tram.

Maeng Gyong Jae's Morning Star Printing House was at Tabang-gol. Maeng had met Kim Hyong Jik in Pyongyang three years ago at a lecture on the Korean alphabet. He had been doing research on the problems of the Korean language and had become a patriot under the tutelage of Chu Si Gyong.

After the teacher's death Maeng had joined several of his colleagues in starting up a movement to disseminate the Korean alphabet, through which he had worked hard to instil patriotism and opposition to the Japanese in the minds of the Koreans.

The lecture at Pyongyang had put Maeng in touch with Kim Hyong Jik and they had discussed their aspirations. And Maeng had been impressed by Kim Hyong Jik's personality, by his great aims and his remarkable ability. Maeng had stayed in Pyongyang for three days, discussing his plans with him and received instructions. From then on Maeng had acted under his guidance. On Kim Hyong Jik's advice, Maeng had set up a printing shop at Tabang-gol. Kim Hyong Jik suggested that the printing shop would be able to print and disseminate useful books to serve the independence movement quite legally and that what was more important, it would be able to print secret appeals and manifestos to the Korean people. On the last National Humiliation Day (August 29, the day Japan annexed Korea in 1910—*Tr.*) and on several other occasions Maeng had had such documents printed and sent them to his comrades in Seoul and in the rural areas where they were scattered.

At Chongro the two men got off the tram and sauntered along a dark deserted alleyway to the Chonggye-chon River.

"Your family is all right, I hope. How is your mother? Is she feeling better?" asked Kim Hyong Jik.

"They are well, thank you. My mother took the medicine you prescribed, and is now well enough to move about. She always says, 'How can I repay Mr. Kim Hyong Jik of Pyongyang' and 'Mr. Kim knows about everything under the sun'."

"Don't say things like that. Anyhow I'm glad the medicine was effective. I was afraid she might be too old to recover. And your eldest daughter must be quite grown up by now. A delightful singer. Her name is Gum Sun, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. She has been at school since last spring. The year before last when you were here to help us with the boycott of the Fair she became so attached to you that we had a job to dissuade her from going with you."

"Ha, ha, ha. How time flies."

Kim Hyong Jik also asked him about all the comrades in Seoul.

Maeng briefed him on the situation, as they walked.

"...Generally speaking, many people in Seoul support our policy of achieving independence by our own efforts. But there

are some who are still drunk on the illusion spread in honeyed words by Song Se Ho, alias, Chong Am who visited here recently. Then there are muddleheaded middle-of-the-roaders who advocate a compromise between our policy of self-reliance and their policy of dependence on foreign forces. They want both...."

"To blend the two, you mean?"

Dumbfounded, Kim Hyong Jik smiled bitterly.

"They do. Chong Am came straight from Pyongyang to Seoul and stayed for more than a month; he made tedious speeches in churches and schools to members of the independence movement, sympathizers, people of standing and students and spread the venomous idea of relying on foreign forces. We were at a loss how to deal with this chaos. Fortunately, Mr. Kang Jin Sok came here a few days ago, and he helped us a great deal. Mr. Kang is already active here. Quite a few people bowed before his succinct logic. He went out this evening to see a man who had requested a meeting with him."

"Is that so? You have been having a difficult time of it then. We'll see if we can find the answer. By the way, have you had any news from Kim Sok Ha in Kyongsang Province?"

"We're worrying about him, too. I sent a telegram to him as you suggested, asking him to come up to Seoul by the day before yesterday, but we haven't heard from him."

"No word at all?"

"We did receive his telegram in reply the day after we telegraphed."

Kim Hyong Jik walked without a word for a while. He had been more worried about the situation in Kyongsang Province where Kim Sok Ha was active than in Seoul, Songchon or any other place. Kim belonged to the most passionate and audacious of the comrades, but he got excited too easily and lacked calm and strategy. According to the interim report from him a few days ago he had been active across the whole of Kyongsang Province, rallying comrades. The speed with which Kim had worked and his unusual results had made Kim Hyong Jik rather apprehensive. That was why Kim Hyong Jik had asked them to send for him so he would meet him and find out about the situation while he was in Seoul.

"Let's find out what happened to him tomorrow," said Kim Hyong Jik, looking at Maeng Gyong Jae.

"Let's."

Kim Hyong Jik walked on without a word, in a withdrawn mood.

As they reached a small building which housed the Morning Star Printing House, the door opened and a tall man came out, whom Kim Hyong Jik instantly recognized as his elder brother-in-law.

"Brother!"

"Oh, brother. You've come just at the right moment. They said there was a telegram and I got so impatient that I was going down to the tram stop...."

His brother-in-law spoke in his usual tone of voice—free and easy. The brothers went into the house hand in hand, Maeng following in their wake, moved at seeing their reunion. He ushered them into the end-room of the main building past a room with two printing presses where an acrid smell of oil saluted their nostrils. Maeng used this room as his study-bed room. Books were piled up along the walls.

Seated across from the two men, Kim Hyong Jik heard a detailed account of the situation in Hwanghae Province and Seoul. The situation in Hwanghae Province was just as satisfactory as the report he received at Naedong had indicated. But in Seoul he thought a radical change was needed. He revealed the idea which he had formed while walking along the alleyway just before.

"It's true that the situation is somewhat complicated in Seoul. But if we map out a detailed line of action and carry it out energetically, I'm sure we can tide over the crisis. In my view, we must first draw these eclectic middle-of-the-roaders into our fold. That is the key to changing the situation here in Seoul."

Kim Hyong Jik looked inquiringly at Kang Jin Sok and Maeng Gyong Jae.

"That is a good idea, sir," Maeng approved. "If they once joined us it would mean a radical change for the better in the whole movement in Seoul."

"And it would make it easier to win over other sections of the people," said Kang Jin Sok, animatedly.

"The question is how to win them over," Kim Hyong Jik continued. "First we must have a full grasp of their specific situation. You two have given me the impression that there are two reasons why they are vacillating without a firm viewpoint. One is that they are still under the sway of a deep-

rooted flunkeyism, the thought of relying on foreign forces, the despicable notion that Korea, as a small nation, cannot survive without the help of some great power; and remember Chong Am's recent speeches have had considerable effect. Then I think that we have failed to convince them of our idea of achieving independence by our own effort, of our far-reaching plan to liberate the nation. This is amply proved by the fact that they are trying vainly to blend the two ideas."

"You've seen the defect in our work," said Maeng Gyong Jae, raising his balding head. He had been listening to him, stooping his short, sturdy body. He admired Kim Hyong Jik's shrewd insight, the way he always got right to the bottom of things.

"That sort of mistake is possible because we have just started our work. The question is how to put it right. First we must free the waverers from their flunkeyism, from the idea of relying on foreign powers, especially, from the illusion that they can depend on Western nations which Chong Am spread. Then they will dismiss the idea of relying on foreign forces of their own accord. We must start a tough, consistent propaganda offensive by all means and for this we must work on the comrades who have joined us, first by getting them to understand, and thoroughly, our idea for achieving independence and having got them into action, we must do all we can to work on people collectively and case by case. Let me suggest a more detailed plan."

Kim Hyong Jik stopped for a few moments as if to turn the plan over in his own mind. Then he produced detailed proposals—arrangements for short training courses for comrades already in the fold, assigning them the task of each winning over at least two others, and arranging secret lectures and seminars for different sections of people in the town.

They discussed Kim Hyong Jik's plan all night. They first decided that Kim Hyong Jik should give a talk at a comrade's house in Roryangjin next day, and that he should address two more secret meetings during his stay in Seoul, for the patriotic and cultural enlightenment workers, the youth and students and the wavering members of the independence movement.

The discussion ended as the new day dawned over the bleak streets of Seoul on the threshold of the rain season, which seemed to have been writhing in nightmare the whole night.

Kim Hyong Jik had not a wink of sleep that night, but still

he sat at Maeng Gyong Jae's low table, working on the notes for the lecture he was giving that afternoon. Meanwhile, in another room, Kang Jin Sok and Maeng Gyong Jae discussed the arrangement for the short training courses and the lectures, and the special precautions needed to protect Kim Hyong Jik at these places; how to keep enemy spies and agents out of the audience.

4

The lecture was held in a community school at the foot of a suburban hill, in a small meeting hall not much bigger than the classroom and the audience of fifty to sixty filled it to the brim. People in various styles of attire were listening to the speaker on the rostrum. The elderly in traditional Korean costumes looked like scholars; there were members of the independence and patriotic enlightenment movements; and three were young men in their twenties in the latest Western clothes, their hair cut in foreign styles. In the front there were a dozen or so students all around twenty, in Korean clothes, looking at the lecturer with bright eyes, their student caps on their laps.

Kim Hyong Jik did not gesticulate or use the oratory characteristic of that time. Nor did he raise his voice; he spoke calmly, though his ardour shone in his wise eyes. But the audience was spellbound and they hung on his every word, tense and absolutely still.

Kim Hyong Jik was analysing the situation, using numerous examples from Korean and world history to prove to them that reliance on external forces was the road to the extermination of a nation. The force of his sharp, straightforward arguments brought out this essential truth, this precious lessons hidden in the depths of history.

"...As you see, there is no precedence in the history of mankind in our or any other country, where national independence and freedom have been achieved or preserved through reliance on outside forces. How, then, can we believe in honeyed words, in any 'guarantee' that our nation can achieve its liberation through help or sympathy from Western powers?"

As he asked this question he looked all round the audience. They were breathless, the students in the front row silently clenching their fists on their laps. Finally Kim Hyong Jik drew the inevitable conclusion that there was no way for the Korean people to reclaim their national rights except by their own efforts. Then eloquently he developed his far-reaching plan to regain independence and sovereignty. The audience could see it vividly—colossal pillars erected on huge foundation stones dug deep in the ground to remain firmly emplaced there for ever, with powerful rafters crossing over them as the imposing superstructures took shape.

"...The Korean nation has only one road to take. There is no alternative. However hard the road, however great the dangers on the way, it is the only road for us to follow...." Kim Hyong Jik wound up.

Sitting in the back row, a middle-aged scholarly man in white ramie clothes, his hair receding at the temples with an elegant moustache, could not suppress his deep emotion and whispered to a gentleman of about 30 in Western clothes.

"His argument is great, profound and lucid, indeed. I believe there is no greater thinker nowadays. I myself claimed to have studied history but I must now admit that I have only skimmed the surface. His words have convinced me that our urgent task is to free ourselves from this habit of study for study's sake."

He was a well known historian who taught at this community school.

"I agree, sir. What is the good of learning about the past, if it does not tell us how to solve the problems raised by the independence movement now? I am ashamed, for ours has been a lot of empty talk. Clearly achieving independence and national resurrection with the foreign help is untenable." The younger man whispered back, his face flushed. He was a disciple of the elderly historian, who had given up his studies abroad and was now engaged in independence movement, getting in touch with comrades at home and abroad.

"The meeting is drawing to a close, I think. We can't just part with Mr. Kim after this one lecture. How about going to talk to him afterwards to hear more of his views, Mr. Kang?"

"Let us do so."

"Let's."

A group of middle-aged members of the independence

movement sitting on the right had been listening intently. They were taking cautious attitude characteristic of their age. A serious-looking gentleman of 40 or thereabouts with his arms folded and his eyes half closed, was trying to control his excitement. Then he breathed deeply, opened his eyes, and stared at the lecturer.

The stocky man next to him said:

"We should have met Mr. Kim long ago."

The latter nodded his agreement.

"You're right. We have been voyaging without a destination, without a chart or compass."

"But now we have our course, do we not?"

"Let us raise our sails high now, upholding Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's plan to achieve independence by our own effort."

The enthusiastic students in the front row were watching the lecturer without blinking their black, shining eyes. They were quick to react to the new trend of the times and loved truth ardenly, and their eyes twinkled like morning stars.

The applause was stormy as Kim Hyong Jik finished the lecture. Returning the salute of the audience, he walked leisurely towards the anteroom. The applause became still louder as he withdrew.

In the anteroom at the back of the meeting room, Kim Hyong Jik had a glass of water from the kettle on the table to wet his throat. He was followed in by the principal and superintendent of this school and a few leading figures of the independence movement, among them the historian who had been whispering to his neighbour.

The principal who had a white moustache and wore white ramie *turumagi* like Kim Hyong Jik went up to him and spoke reverently.

"Mr. Kim, you have opened my eyes."

Everyone in the room agreed.

"Thank you. But this is a serious problem that concerns our country's destiny. So we'll have to study it exhaustively, exchange our views frankly before defining a correct policy," said Kim Hyong Jik gently.

"You must be very tired here away from home, but all of us would like to meet you this evening and hear more of your views...."

The speaker was the younger man, who sat with the historian. He spoke apologetically.

"That's all right. I would also like to hear your views. Please sit down," Kim Hyong Jik informally indicated the wicker, office and classroom chairs around the table and they all took seats.

It was drizzling outside, the first rain of the rainy season and there was a monotonous dripping from the eaves.

The men looked at each other's faces hesitantly. Finally the middle-aged historian spoke. He asked Kim Hyong Jik for a more detailed explanation of the coming conflict in the East between the Western powers and Japan. Then, just as the water breaks through the dyke, they all began to ask questions waiting for the answers anxiously.

Kim Hyong Jik answered each question convincingly, in the same calm and gentle voice as on the rostrum.

It was past midnight now; all their questions had been answered and their meeting was drawing to a close. Suddenly the door of the anteroom was flung open and in came Maeng Gyong Jae. His eyes searching for Kim Hyong Jik betrayed anxious forebodings.

"Excuse me, sir, but I've got something to tell you...."

Maeng Gyong Jae tried hard to suppress his excitement. Kim Hyong Jik followed him out into the corridor. The patter of the rain was louder now.

"Kim Sok Ha has just arrived."

"Has he?"

"He is wounded. He had been hiding in Mt. Pukhan-san for three days. And this evening he came down into the town in the rain. The situation has worsened in Kyongsang Province."

"How is his wound?"

"He was shot under the arm. He is in a bad way, because he had a hard time getting to Seoul without having the wound dressed."

Kim Hyong Jik's face clouded.

"Let us go. But first we must get treatment for him. Doesn't one of our comrades work at the Severance Hospital? Could you pick him up on the way?"

"I will."

Maeng Gyong Jae left first.

Though very worried Kim Hyong Jik went back into the anteroom and concluded the discussion. Before leaving, he

promised to meet them again for further discussion on how to foster the strength of the independence movement and build up the leadership organization.

Kim Hyong Jik and Kang Jin Sok hurried through the rain in the dark back streets of Seoul under an open paper umbrella. The black clouds hung low over the streets. Mt. Pukhan-san and Mt. Inwang-san were shrouded in the clouds. The night rain looked like black stone ink.

By the time they arrived Maeng's home, the doctor from the Severance Hospital was bandaging Kim Sok Ha's shoulder and waist.

As soon as he saw Kim Hyong Jik, Kim Sok Ha tried to get up, calling his name.

Kim Hyong Jik too called to Kim in a voice that shook with emotion, hugged him and laid him down.

"Lie still. The doctor must finish bandaging you first. You must have had a very hard time getting here in this state...."

Kim Hyong Jik was so upset that he could not finish his sentence.

"Sir, I...."

Kim Sok Ha's face twitched; he could say no more and he closed his eyes. Tears streamed from his closed eyes.

"What's the matter? Don't get excited. There is nothing to worry about. You'll be all right after the treatment."

Kim Hyong Jik comforted the wounded man, clasping his hand. He turned to the doctor and asked:

"How is his wound?"

"It looks pretty nasty because he didn't get it treated, but his lungs are undamaged."

"That's good anyway. Don't worry, Kim. You'll be better after treatment." Kim Hyong Jik looked very relieved; he took Sok Ha's wrist and checked his pulse.

"Sir...." Sok Ha again muttered only to shed tears.

The doctor went, leaving the four men alone. Calmer and less in pain, Kim Sok Ha began to tell what had happened.

"As I reported last, things had gone well in North Kyongsang Province. So well that I acted rashly." Kim Sok Ha's voice was choked, as he was tormented by conscience and repentance.

"In South Kyongsang Province, my first round of work led me to Kochang. There was one of my primary school-mates

there. So I went straight to meet him. I just believed in his friendship; I didn't even try to find out what he had been doing. But what a thing he had done! When I began to talk he looked frightened which struck me as rather strange. But as we talked on, he seemed to accept my proposals. So I trusted him. I found out later that he had deceived me. He said quite earnestly, 'No Korean would ever object to your proposals!' As we had met after a long separation, he suggested, he should dine together and carry on with the discussion in the evening. And who would have thought that this guy would betray me, would inform against me to the police?"

"My God!" Maeng Gyong Jae clicked his tongue.

"The dinner table had been set rather late, when I heard footsteps and the rattling of metal outside. I sprang to my feet to find the police entering the room. I shot the renegade and one of the raiders with my revolver and escaped through the back door. I climbed over the fence, and then I was hit under the shoulder; I made for the mountains and followed the mountain trails day and night. I trekked north and reached Mt. Pukhan-san two days ago." Kim Sok Ha's voice was fading and he gasped for breath as if he was in great pain.

"I see. You were lucky at that," commented Kang Jin Sok.

"Mr. Kim!" Kim Sok Ha cried out suddenly, raising his head. His blood-shot eyes showed fury and mental suffering. The wound made his large and sturdy face look grim.

"As I disregarded your warnings, I don't deserve to live. I think I should die. I thought of killing myself, but didn't, because I was afraid I would be committing a greater crime if I killed myself without reporting what had happened. So I was brazen enough to come here. In fact, I haven't the face to meet you, sir. I think I should die."

Kim Sok Ha cried out in pain and dropped his head, his big body trembling like a leaf.

While listening to Kim Sok Ha's story, Kim Hyong Jik thought of many things. He realized that Kim Sok Ha's latest blunder was very instructive, for it showed up serious defects in the work of some comrades working in different parts of the country. However, he could not discuss this problem here and now. If he did, it would wound Kim Sok Ha, body and soul. The immediate need was to look after the wounded comrade, to take him in his warm embrace so that he might recover quickly, mentally and physically.

"What are you talking about? Don't be a weakling. Why should you die? Because of a small mistake? You thought our revolutionary work was sailing before the wind? If we are to fight the Japs through to victory, we'll have to face many bitterer setbacks and still greater hardships. But haven't we already resolved to face them? What good would you do by putting the muzzle of your pistol to your forehead? Cheer up. We are very happy that you've come to us alive. Whatever setbacks we make, while our comrades are alive, we can achieve our great task."

Kim Hyong Jik encouraged the wounded in a gentle earnest voice, holding his hand.

Kim Sok Ha raised his eyes.

"Mr. Kim!"

He called in a muffled voice. His lips moved convulsively; he was profoundly impressed by Kim Hyong Jik's magnanimity and loving care; and his strong shoulders suddenly started to rise and fall and his head dropped.

Kim Hyong Jik supported Kim Sok Ha and made him lie down on the bed.

"Good. Don't get excited, that doesn't do any good. Now, have a good rest."

When they saw that Kim Sok Ha was calmer, the three men came out into the damp, gloomy outhouse with the printing presses. It was dimly lit by a bare electric light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

"The situation in Kyongsang Province is critical. If the enemy finds any clues as a result of Kim's blunder, all the comrades in the provinces will be in danger. We must go down there right away to see if we can save the situation. Let's do this way. I'll leave by train tomorrow night. You take care of the work here in Seoul with Mr. Maeng. And could you send a message to Naedong, asking them to extend the holidays for ten days or so."

Kim Hyong Jik expressed his resolve.

"You mean you'll go there yourself?!"

Maeng was stunned. Kang Jin Sok lowered his head in meditation.

"Yes. And without further delay."

"No, you mustn't go. You really mustn't. Please let me go instead." Maeng said clinging to Kim Hyong Jik's sleeves.

At this moment Kang Jin Sok raised his head slowly.

"Mr. Maeng is right. You mustn't go, brother. And, Mr. Maeng, you mustn't go either, because you must take care of our business in Seoul. Mr. Maeng, I'm the right man to do the job."

Kang Jin Sok said it quietly but firmly.

"Brother, you look after the affairs in Seoul. I'm going," said Kim Hyong Jik again.

"Brother!" said Kang Jin Sok softly; and he came close to Kim Hyong Jik and took both his hands. "I cannot approve this decision. Don't worry and leave the matter to me. It's not the question of who gives way to whom. Each of us must do his own job."

Kang Jin Sok's words were so earnest and profound that Kim Hyong Jik could find no word to insist on his resolve, only staring at his brother-in-law. He quietly controlled the warm feeling arising in his heart. Logically, in this situation, his brother-in-law was right. However, he found it difficult to let him go into the danger spot, to a place where the enemy was hunting down our forces. And yet he knew that it would be impossible to break his brother-in-law's firm determination.

"Brother!" Kim Hyong Jik called his voice shaking but he could not find words. Only then Kang Jin Sok said with a smile.

"Don't worry about me, brother. I have been to Kyongsang Province many times and I have several close friends there. So I'm sure I can set the situation right and get back safely."

Next evening Kim Hyong Jik, Kang Jin Sok and Maeng Gyong Jae stood on a high bank of the Han-gang River where the rain was falling fiercely.

"Since you are going down there yourself I've nothing to say. I'm afraid I might be a bit too apprehensive but...." Kim Hyong Jik stammered. He stood under Maeng's umbrella, facing his brother-in-law who wore a rain coat.

"Go ahead and speak up."

"Though it is not a general phenomenon, the defect of our comrades' activity is that they act hastily, recklessly, at the spur of the moment without careful planning. This has been clearly proved by the cases of Hong in Songchon, Pang In Su in Pyongyang. Kim Sok Ha's is the latest case."

"That's true."

"The main reason is that our comrades themselves have

not yet thoroughly grasped our new far-reaching plan for independence. Therefore, just as they did when they were engaged in the independence movement before, they try to recruit comrades, like recruiting soldiers or workers, and scurry about as if they were going to carry out some decisive action. If they stick to the casual method the past independence movement used, they can hardly achieve success, however righteous our plan."

"Quite right."

"Therefore, I believe that our immediate task is to exert our efforts to thoroughly inform our comrades of the ideas and objectives of our new independence movement, and to implant the same spirit in all whom we win over, even though they be few, and train competent comrades who will share life and death with us, with one faith. When I return to my place I'll work harder to push ahead with our work in this direction."

"I understand. I certainly will do so. Now, go back. The rain is getting heavier. And Mr. Maeng, you too have a lot of work to do, eh?"

Kim Hyong Jik and Kang Jin Sok shook hands in silence.

Kang Jin Sok went down the bank, looking across at the streets of Seoul whose lights were dimly visible through the rain. Kim Hyong Jik stood still, watching his brother-in-law.

A plaintive whistle sounded as a train pulled out for an unknown destination.

Presently Kim Hyong Jik turned to Maeng who was holding up the umbrella and said, "Let's go." He strode down the path on the bank in the torrential rain. Maeng followed him quickly. That evening, the leaders of a group in Seoul who advocated dependence on foreign forces would be waiting for Kim Hyong Jik in the house of a comrade who had conducted a short training course in Roryangjin. They had requested the meeting.

The rain poured down harder but Kim Hyong Jik's steps were firm as always.

Kim Hyong Jik stayed on in Seoul for two more days, though he had planned to leave next day. The discussion begun that night lasted through to the next evening. The arguments had been heated, but Kim Hyong Jik's well-founded and earnest persuasion brought most of the advocates of dependence on

foreign forces to their knees and the others were quite crestfallen.

Kim Hyong Jik had not had time to visit the poor boy coolie whom he had met outside the railway station on his arrival and he asked Maeng Gyong Jae to take a doctor to the boy's home and give him what help he could. Then he caught the northbound train.

5

This day, as usual, Ho Gi Son got up at dawn to carry newly mixed manure out to the edge of the maize field. The sky was getting lighter over Mt. Adal-san. As he went towards the yard, an unloaded A-frame carrier on his back, he could hear Sun Hui reading aloud. He stopped by the twig gate to listen.

"...Gomannyo who lives next door has four sisters. She is the youngest daughter. Having given birth to her, her mother turned over on her side weeping in her bed and refused to eat even a bowl of seaweed soup. Her father stayed out for two days drinking wine on credit at the Maekjon ferry tavern. On the third day he came home and named the baby Gomannyo. Gomannyo means no more girls, they say. In old days grown-ups did not regard women as human beings. But our teacher tells us different. He says this is a bad custom fixed by the Japanese and the Korean noblemen in old days in order to make women into playthings. Women are just as human as men. That is what the teacher said. He taught us that because we lost our country to the Japs, everyone, man and woman, young and old, must pool their efforts to drive out the Japanese enemy and reclaim our country.

"The teacher said: We Korean boys and girls are both full-fledged workers who will shoulder the destiny of Korea; we must grow up fresh and sturdy like the green pines on Mt. Ponghwa-san and become a strong force to kick out the Japs and build a new Korea.

"Although I am a girl I shall strengthen my soul and body and shoulder Korea's future alongside the men, as the

teacher asked me to...."

Sitting under the A-frame carrier, Ho Gi Son was surprised to hear his daughter reading aloud, and he went into the yard, laughing in spite of himself.

"My, did you hear me?..."

She blushed, with a reproachful look, holding the notebook against her chest.

"Ha, ha, ha. What was it Gomannyo's father did?" Ho Gi Son again laughed aloud.

"Don't, please, Father."

Sun Hui pouted her lips.

"Why don't you write about your father? You could say, my father brought me up in boy's clothes."

Ho Gi Son said this laughingly but, in fact, his daughter's reading had pricked his conscience.

"Don't you say that, Father. I know you no longer think of me as...."

Sun Hui faltered.

"And Gomannyo's father, too, thinks differently now. But did you write that yourself, girl?" asked the father, rather pleased. She had been at school for only a few months now, but both mentally and physically she had changed beyond recognition. Now she behaved nicely and modestly. She might surprise us all yet, although he rather wondered, and not without fear, whether girls could ever do anything worthwhile, however bright and talented. But that was for the future. Now at any rate, he pinned his hopes on his daughter and it was his only pleasure now to see her grow before his eyes, both mentally and physically.

"I wrote it. It is my composition. The teacher asked me to write one at home. I'm not doing it too well. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Homework, eh? Then you must do a good job.... But why isn't the teacher back yet, girl? Doesn't the school open today?" Ho Gi Son asked suddenly.

"The day before yesterday Mr. Cho Pil U came from Pyongyang. He brought lots of notebooks, pencils, chalk and a clock bought by Mr. Kim Hyong Jik and told us that the teacher would be back soon.... I visited his lodging last night with my friends but he wasn't back yet," said Sun Hui in worried tones.

"H'm, he must come home safe.... Anyway you finish your homework. You must do it well. He'll be back today."

Ho Gi Son cast a worried look at the dawning sky before going to the back yard.

He put down his A-frame in front of the ash dump and started to pile ash into a *samtaegi* (a basket for carrying dirt and rubbish—*Tr.*).

The voice of his daughter reading out her composition came back to him. When he had loaded the ash onto the matted rack of the A-frame, he stretched himself and looked across the field to the next village, a worried look in his eyes. His eyes fell on Pak Byong Tae's tile-roofed house standing imposingly right in the middle of Tongkyon village. Suddenly Ho Gi Son heaved a deep sigh.

He had been happy all spring, feeling hope and the joy of living for the first time in his life, hearing his daughter read and sing. But he had carried around a worry in the last few days. Whenever he thought of it his heart would sink, even while hearing his daughter read. This spring his maize was growing well; Kim Hyong Jik had given him the seed. And he had weeded the maize field light-heartedly but the thought made him draw a long sigh and feel utterly helpless.

The day after Kim Hyong Jik had left or thereabouts Pak Byong Tae had come back from Pyongyang to his main house at Naedong. Next morning Choe, his clerk, came round and asked Ho Gi Son to repay his debt within five days. Otherwise, Choe threatened, Pak would give him hell.

He had borrowed the money two years ago when Sun Hui had been dangerously ill with pneumonia. He had been kicked out of Pak's house years ago and the sight of the landlord would make him grit his teeth in anger, but there was no alternative but to go to him and borrow 50 *ryang* (or five *won*), sealing the I.O.U. with his thumb print. Despite his repeated resolve, however, he had been unable to repay the debt because he lived from hand to mouth. Thanks to Kim Hyong Jik's kindness he had been expecting a bumper crop of maize and he had worked very hard determined to repay the debt first of all. But they were asking him to pay up right away, and just before the barley harvest when hardly a soul would have a single *ryang*. Where could he hope to get 50 now? The five-day period expired today. He was desperate, wondering what to do.

He stood there with a vacant look and then drew a deep sigh that sank the ground. He made up his mind to go to Pak Byong Tae after breakfast. I'll ask him to wait until autumn or at least until barley harvest, he thought. I must repay that damned debt; we can live on grass roots in summer.

Ho Gi Son went on loading ash into the *samtaegi.* The matted rack of the A-frame was fully loaded.

Kim Hyong Jik had taught him that it was necessary to apply fertilizer lavishly to the maize field. When his maize ripened, he would certainly be able to repay the debt, but only then. Ho Gi Son rose with the A-frame on his back. As he was going through the twig gate, he heard the loud, clear notes of a bugle from Mt. Ponghwa-san. He stopped to look at the hill.

"They say Gap Dol blows the bugle every morning while Mr. Kim Hyong Jik is away. How early that late riser is getting up! And he blows the bugle quite well.... Mr. Kim will be coming today...." Ho Gi Son thought to himself as he adjusted his A-frame and started out.

At this very moment he heard hurried footsteps from behind and then Sun Hui shouted.

"Father, Mr. Kim has come—"

"Has he?"

Ho Gi Son stopped, delighted, looked alternatively at his daughter running and at the old pine tree halfway up the hill.

"Mr. Kim is blowing the bugle," called Sun Hui looking back at her father as she ran towards Mt. Ponghwa-san, her abundant pigtail dancing on her back. From every village, from Sojae, Tongkyon, Undong Valley, Saem villages, the children ran towards the hill, shouting, "The teacher has come." "Mr. Kim!"

Ho Gi Son could see a white figure moving about under the pine tree. It must be Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, he thought.

"So he made his journey overnight. My Goodness...." Ho Gi Son mumbled, deeply grateful to the teacher. Grown-ups came out into their yards to look up at the hill and suddenly the empty village became animated.

Ho Gi Son felt firm and strong. He readjusted the A-frame and strode ahead.

Ho Gi Son unloaded the manure in the field. As he was

nearing the well, he saw Choe, Pak Byong Tae's clerk, hurrying towards him from the opposite direction. Choe signalled to Ho to come with him, saying that his master wanted to see him right now. Ho's heart sank. What does he want me for? He said to himself. I thought I would go and see him after breakfast. He asked Choe to go back and say he would be there soon. But Choe said Ho must come with him right away. He followed Choe who walked with an arrogant air; he felt uneasy, looking at the back of the little clerk. The other day Choe had been at Ho's threatening that he would have a hell of hard time if he could not pay the debt. Choe's words were still ringing in his ears.

Pak Byong Tae was a landlord and a usurer. His mansion right in the middle of Tongkyon village was surrounded by high walls. As you went through the big gate you would see a huge tile-roofed house. On either side of it flat thatched houses jostled together like matchboxes; they looked as if the imposing mansion in the middle was stifling them.

Ho Gi Son went through the gate into the yard of the big house; he found Pak Byong Tae stalking up and down the yard in a white shirt and grey trousers with a matching waist coat, a gold watch chain looped from the pocket.

Pak Byong Tae had returned from the town in a cheerful mood. Everything had gone almost as well as he could hope. He had even been received by the provincial governor. The governor had an expressionless face and you could not tell what was on his mind but it had seemed to him that he had treated him quite well. The governor had said: "The Empire of Japan pins great hopes on loyal Koreans like yourself. So you must show still greater devotion." These words were meaningful and not at all complimentary, though uttered in a casual tone. Pak had served the Japanese devotedly and distinguished himself in helping them with the land survey; and he had just presented to the governor with a stone ink container, a genuine *Koryo* ceramic which had cost him quite a bit of money. Who knows he might be lucky enough to be appointed head of a township or even a county? Agreement had already been reached on opening a public primary school in the township of Koup. He had been told that the educational department of the province had sent a directive to the county office and that he would be appointed president of the society to prepare the establishment of the school. It

now seemed that Pak Byong Tae's ambitions were beginning to be realized—he was ambitious to buy power with his money and to multiply that power into pomp and glory. And to add to his good fortune, Gye Wol, his mistress in the town, had given birth to a chubby boy.

He must send a nursemaid to her right away—today or tomorrow. She must be pouting her lovely lips because five days were gone and he had not yet kept his promise and when he went to town next time, she'll be sure to nag....

As Pak Byong Tae was lost in such desultory thoughts, Ho Gi Son came into the yard.

"You've come?"

Woken from his thoughts, Pak Byong Tae recognized him, and set his small, dried-up face into a dignified expression.

"Yes, sir."

Ho Gi Son put his hands together and bowed. Pak Byong Tae gave a big cough and was about to speak, when suddenly the pupils' shouts came from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Pak knitted his brows and looked up. The slope of the hill was dotted with white-flowered wild jujube bushes. Loud commands issued from among the bushes. The line between Pak's brows deepened. The sound of the bugle and the youngsters' voices often woke Pak from his sweet morning sleep, particularly on the morning after he came back from town. His family had told him that the bugler was the young teacher who had come to the village recently. The whole village respected him, respectfully calling him "Mr. Kim". He had been surprised to find an excellent new school building. Pak Byong Tae did not like all these changes. Pak had grabbed nearly all the land in this and the adjacent villages but was not popular. He was rated much lower than Chong Jin Gu who was not rich but who was popular. And here was this Mr. Kim from nowhere and the whole village had become quite animated. This Mr. Kim had joined with Chong Jin Gu and the two were running the school. Pak had a strong foreboding that he might have a strong rival in his way.

But Pak Byong Tae shook his head. Soon he would be one of the sponsors of a big new school to be opened in the township and as president of the school supporters' association would have the whole township under his sway.

He laughed at himself for his timid view. He cleared his throat again, looked at Ho Gi Son and spoke sternly: "Did

you get my message from my clerk Choe five days ago?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ho Gi Son bowing, his voice so small that it was barely audible. He was very frightened.

"H'm, you scoundrel, you! What a coarse face you have! Why don't you pay back the money I lent you two years ago? Whom are you relying on? I sent Choe several days ago to ask you to pay your debt, and you only show up today. Why? H'm?"

Pak's cracked voice made Ho Gi Son shudder.

"I'm relying on nobody, sir. These have been lean years and I haven't been able to repay you. Urged by Mr. Choe I tried to raise the money but I have failed. And I was too ashamed to come to you. What's the good of coming empty-handed?"

Ho Gi Son explained to the money-lender about what a plight he was in.

"Shut your mouth, you brazen rogue. You really are ungrateful. Stop grumbling. Now what we'll do is this. You pay me my 20 *won* now or else...."

"What! Twenty *won*?! You mean 200 *ryang*?"

Ho's eyes were wide with amazement.

"How much did you think it was then?"

"You lent me 50 *ryang,* didn't you? Erh, I, I sealed the I.O.U. with the thumb prepared by Mr. Choe here in your presence, sir...." Ho was so taken aback that he was at a loss what to say.

"The fellow has some nerve!" spat out Pak Byong Tae, and turned to Choe who had been standing behind him. Choe stepped forward, producing a piece of paper from his waistcoat pocket:

"Here's the I.O.U. sealed with your thumb. It says you will pay an annual interest of 100 per cent. So by the autumn before last the debt had increased to 100 *ryang,* and it doubled, that is, increased to 200 *ryang* or 20 *won* by last autumn, you see? And by this autumn, it will be 400 *ryang.*"

This was a shock for Ho Gi Son. He felt as if he was hit by a sledgehammer at the back of his head. He stood there open-mouthed and speechless.

"When you are hard pressed, you ask others for money, and now you try some other trick, eh? What you deserve is the immediate attachment of your property—and imprisonment, but I'll forgive you because you've tilled my land. Well,

what we'll do is this: either you bring me the 20 *won* today or you send Sun Hui here tomorrow morning."

"Oh, what do you want with Sun Hui?..."

Ho Gi Son was stunned.

"Let her work at my house just for three years."

Ho Gi Son's head was spinning. He could not understand what the landlord meant.

"You should be grateful to the lord, Gi Son. Your daughter will be well fed and well dressed at his concubine's house in Pyongyang; all she'll have to do is to look after the baby, just for three years." Choe tried to persuade Ho. Only then did it dawn on Ho what Pak Byong Tae meant. All the colour faded from his face.

"Sir, I... I can't let Sun Hui do that. Please wait until autumn... no, erh... until barley harvest... or if you don't agree, I'll serve you in her place...."

Ho pleaded, flurried, barely knowing what he said.

"So you mean you can't send Sun Hui here, eh?" Pak Byong Tae's voice was as sharp as the edge of a knife.

"Sir, she is... my life...."

"And I lent you the money to save her life, or have you forgotten? I helped you. And you have not repaid my favour. How dare you object to her nursing a baby for a few years, well-dressed and well-fed, you stubborn oaf!" The blood rushed to the enraged landlord's temples.

"Oh, sir, I mean... I ... I'll work for you...."

"Shut your mouth. You don't appreciate my favour.... If you don't pay the debt this very day, I'll have your house attached tomorrow and have you thrown into jail," said Pak Byong Tae and disdainfully turned on his heel.

"Sir!" Ho Gi Son called after him but Pak did not even look round. Ho stood rooted to the ground, as if he had lost his soul. He felt dizzy, felt as if he was going to fall. Choe came to him and advised him to fetch his daughter now and beg the landlord for mercy. That was his only way out, he told him. Ho suddenly felt as if flame were surging up from his heart, consuming him. He clenched his fists and strode up to Choe with glaring eyes.

"What did you say?"

"Why, you... are you crazy?" said Choe, retreating.

Ho Gi Son came out, utterly lost and with a heavy heart. He went home and stood in front of the earthen bank,

his face completely blank. The lower border of the roof thatched with millet straw seemed to be whirling round. No longer able to hold himself up, Ho Gi Son slumped down on the earthen bank.

"What shall I do?..." He murmured like one out of his mind. His eyes had lost their focus and they wandered over the distant sky.

"What is the matter, husband? Has something happened?" Ho Gi Son winced and turned back. His wife was standing beside him, looking at him with a worried eye.

"Well, nothing... nothing is the matter...." Ho Gi Son prevaricated hurriedly.

"Nothing the matter? You went out a while ago with your A-frame, and you are back without it utterly dejected because nothing happened? Are you ill?"

"No,..."

Ho Gi Son hesitated, not knowing how to answer his startled wife. Should he tell her the whole story and discuss what to do or hide it from her and try to get money somehow? But how? It was impossible.

"So you were pushed about the debt again? They told us to pay it back by today...." His wife did not wait for the answer and went on.

"Well, let's pay the whole cursed debt as soon as the barley is harvested, even if we have to starve."

Ho Gi Son stared blankly at his wife. She was more resolute than he on serious matters. However, that would be of no use now.

"To tell the truth, wife, he wants us to send him Sun Hui!" Ho Gi Son said it abruptly, with fury.

"Send him Sun Hui?! What does he mean?..." The wife's eyes bulged with fear. Ho Gi Son drew such a long sigh that the ground sank. He told her the whole story. His wife was dumbfounded and stood speechless for several moments. She looked over at the next village, her face burning with rage.

"God, his father was a swine and he is another. Like father like son...," said the wife, tears streaming down her face. Then she began to sob and covered her face with the edge of her skirt. The tears were ready to well up in the husband's eyes, too.

"Stop it, wife. Sun Hui will be home any minute now. You mustn't let her know, I'll try and get some money today

somehow...."

He tried to soothe his wife, but they were empty words.

The wife raised her head again. There were traces of the tears on her cheeks and the rims of her eyes were red.

"No, you needn't. I'll go see the landlord a little later. I can go and work as a nursemaid, can't I? It might be difficult for you, but Sun Hui could cook for you...."

It sounded reasonable but it was practically impossible.

"But how can you.... Just wait. I'll try to...."

"You'll try to do what? The whole village is living on thin gruel; they are only alive because they can't kill themselves. If you are not thrown into jail, we'll lose Sun Hui.... Don't worry, I'll go and see him later."

His wife replied firmly, and wiping the corners of her eyes with the edge of her skirt, she went into the kitchen. Everything was black before his eyes. I'm a robust man, he thought, and if I have to sell my daughter or my wife, I'd rather die or be in prison than live in this world.

He felt so limp that he was just sitting there distracted when Sun Hui came into the yard. Ho Gi Son's heart was torn at the sight of her. Sun Hui looked miserable, he knew not why, and she studied her father's face. It was queer. But it was impossible that Sun Hui could know what had happened that morning. Sun Hui went into the kitchen. There was the rattle of dishes from there mingled with a sporadic conversation between mother and daughter. Ho Gi Son's heart sank and he listened. The kitchen became silent again; only the rattle of dishes.

The three people started eating their watery gruel but none of them emptied their bowl. The first bell sounded from the school. Sun Hui remained seated, looking plaintively towards the school. Maybe she had some inkling?

"Why are you sitting stupidly like that? You'll be late. Off you go to school." Her mother prodded. Sun Hui glanced at her parents alternately, heaved a deep sigh, and got up. The couple turned away their eyes, as their daughter went out into the yard carrying her books. The mother rubbed the rims of her eyes with her fingers. Now everything was in vain. For a poor peasant, it was ridiculous to have his sons educated, let alone his daughters. They were destined to be kicked around and trampled underfoot like roadside pebbles. It was cheeky to send a daughter to school.... The more you

thought about it, the more you realized the preposterousness of it, but man does not always think that way.

6

The lesson was over. The double doors were flung open and the children swarmed out of the classroom. Kim Hyong Jik went to a chest in the corner, raised the lid and took out a football. Then he followed the pupils out onto the earthen bank. The youngsters were already in the playground, running around cheerfully, making a lot of noise. Smiling, but without a word, Kim Hyong Jik threw the football into the crowd of children.

"A football!"

"The teacher bought us a football!"

"Let me look at it."

There was complete uproar. Somebody had already kicked the ball into the air. Kim Hyong Jik stood looking on, well satisfied. The children used to make a ball out of rags or a piece of straw rope. They ran after the ball in great excitement. As he watched them happily, somebody beside him spoke to him. He looked round. It was Sun Hui, huddled and miserable.

"Oh, it's you...." The teacher turned to her. The girl looked very sad. She had behaved oddly today from the first lesson. Normally she never took her sparkling eyes off the teacher during classes, she always had a ready answer to his questions, read her texts in a very pleasant voice and was gay when playing with the girls, skipping and singing. But today, right from the first lesson she sat without stirring looking blank and plaintive, although she had been very cheerful at the early morning exercise. But what was the matter with her now? Did she feel ill? Or was anyone sick at home? Kim Hyong Jik had wondered during the lesson and decided to ask her what was wrong the first thing during break. Having called to the teacher, Sun Hui dropped her head and was silent. Strangely enough, the girl had a bundle of books under her arm.

"Why, what's wrong with you, child? Are you feeling ill?"

"No, sir," she faltered.

"Then is somebody ill at home?"

Sun Hui did not reply. The teacher could not understand what had happened.

"Good-bye, sir...." Sun Hui said in a tearful voice and then burst into sobs. The teacher was dumbfounded.

"Why, what's the matter, Sun Hui?" asked Kim Hyong Jik in a grave tone of voice, holding her quivering shoulders.

"I must leave the school, sir. Otherwise, mother will have to work as a servant or father will be sent to jail...."

Sun Hui said this between sobs and, unable to control herself, she pressed her face against the teacher's chest. Kim Hyong Jik realized that something had happened to her family, but he did not know what. He held the child to him, his heart gripped by anxiety.

"Calm down, child. Let's go inside. Don't cry. Tell me what has happened."

With his hand on her shoulder, he took her into his office which was partitioned off in a corner of the classroom. Presently the girl controlled herself and began to tell the story.

"I went home after the early morning exercise. And as I opened the gate to go in, father and mother were talking inside...."

The girl had heard the whole conversation between her parents by the twig gate, and told him what she had heard.

"So he is trying to get 20 *won* for the five *won* he lent when you were dangerously ill or else take you in payment of the debt, eh?" asked Kim Hyong Jik after he had heard her out.

"Yes."

"Humph!"

Kim Hyong Jik rose to his feet. His face was hard and fierce. His eyes shone as if emitting fire. Sun Hui watched him and her wet eyes were full of anxiety. She had never imagined such a terrible expression on the teacher's face. The teacher had always been so kind-hearted, gentle and warm as a spring sky. But now his face looked as if he might destroy the whole earth any minute.

"I wish I could beat him to death...."

He was so excited that his shoulders heaved violently. In her heart Sun Hui repented. She thought she should have gone to the landlord's as soon as she had heard her parents' conversation this morning by the twig gate, instead of causing any

trouble to the teacher or her father and mother. It was not too late now. She resolved to go.

"Don't worry about, sir. I'll go and serve him for a few years. It'll be all right. Good-bye, sir...."

Sun Hui swallowed another burst of sobs, pursing her lips and bowing her head. She turned and started to go.

"Sun Hui!" The teacher's voice rang out behind the girl as she got to the door. Sun Hui stopped, heard the teacher approaching and felt his strong hands gripping her shoulders. He turned her round.

"What do you think you're doing? You mustn't do that. You mustn't. It's against all justice to sell a human being—and for five *won,* however cruel this world. Nobody can take you away. You leave it to me. Just study hard and don't worry."

Sun Hui lifted up her face and looked at the teacher. His burning eyes were moist.

"Mr. Kim!" called Sun Hui again and pressed her face against his broad chest.

"Yes, Sun Hui, don't worry. When the last lesson is over we'll go to your house together. That's my girl. Good girls don't cry, you know."

Having persuaded her to go back to her seat, Kim Hyong Jik went outside. The pupils were swarming after the ball uproariously. Standing on the earthen bank, he glared towards Pak Byong Tae's mansion, with its peaked roof curving like the wings of a crane in the centre of Tongkyon village. A wicked world produces wicked people. Kim Hyong Jik tried hard to control his surging anger.

"Just wait and see, you wicked swine. This world hasn't yet got so rotten that fellows of your ilk can swagger about at will," cried Kim Hyong Jik in his heart and went hurriedly over to the bell hanging on the eave.

The bell rang with unusual force.

Kim Hyong Jik taught geography with greater ardour than usual.

After school, he sent the pupils home and accompanied Sun Hui to her house. The atmosphere was funereal; Sun Hui's mother sat in the room sobbing, her skirt over her face. Ho Gi Son was seated on the earthen bank, gazing into empty air, sucking at his pipe. Sun Hui's mother had gone to Pak Byong Tae's house but had just been driven out; the landlord would not listen to her. The couple was confused to see Kim Hyong Jik

coming into the yard with their daughter, and still more confused when he told them that he had heard what had happened from Sun Hui. They remonstrated her for worrying the teacher by telling a story she should not have told.

"Don't you say so. You mustn't be too discouraged. Tell me the whole thing."

Ho Gi Son had lived a lonely life; no one had ever shown any concern for what happened in this dilapidated house. As Kim Hyong Jik prodded him into telling the full story, Ho Gi Son's heart was torn by deep grief. He had an urge to open his heart and to complain. And he told Kim Hyong Jik what had happened two years ago and then about this morning and the insult his wife had suffered at Pak's. Having told it all, Ho Gi Son felt a little better.

Kim Hyong Jik had heard the whole story and kept his eyes on the Maekjon plain where the yellow corn was ripening. Drawing a long sigh, Ho Gi Son added:

"Who should we blame for this, sir? Folks like me are just human scum. Maybe we should blame our fate. I have worked hard, trying to live like a man and I was wrong. I should live as becomes the down-and-out and die when I must die.... But I can't leave Sun Hui in their hands. I'd rather die or go to prison. But after my death what will become of my wife and daughter? That is my only worry...."

Ho Gi Son could not finish; he was so choked up that he gave out.

"Sun Hui's father...." Kim Hyong Jik turned to Ho Gi Son with a determined look—his voice was calm and tender, yet there was a something stern about it. "Why are you so weak-minded?"

Ho Gi Son could not meet Kim Hyong Jik's eyes.

"How can you accept that you and your wife are human scum? Do you believe that a beast in human skin like Pak Byong Tae could be a man? And what do you mean by fate? Your troubles were not caused by fate but by this social system which is designed to serve the rich and oppress the poor. Don't worry, Sun Hui's father; keep your spirits up. I'll put things right." And Kim Hyong Jik's voice sounded earnest and utterly determined.

"Why, you mean you are going to help me...." Ho Gi Son's eyes were wide in astonishment.

"This is not just your problem. I'm Sun Hui's teacher, so

it concerns me and my school and, beyond that, the whole of Naedong village."

"But Pak Byong Tae is supported by the Japanese authorities, and he's as wicked as a scorpion. If you take action against such a fellow, you would run into trouble and...."

"Ha, ha, ha. Don't worry about that. If you are once afraid of a fellow like Pak Byong Tae, you can't do anything in this world. Come to the school this evening, Sun Hui's father. We'll meet there."

With these words Kim Hyong Jik walked briskly out of the yard. "Mr. Kim!..." Ho Gi Son called to him in a shaky voice looking at the back of the teacher with anxious eyes.

"Maybe he's going to raise the money for me?" Ho Gi Son thought to himself and his face flushed with shame. He stood vacantly in the middle of the yard, full of anxiety and apprehension.

Presently the school bell rang. Needless to say it was Kim Hyong Jik who rang it. The children who had gone home flocked back to the school, excited. The teacher told them all to ask their parents to come to the school that evening for an urgent discussion to be held by the school guild. Kim Hyong Jik quietly paced up and down the empty classroom, deep in thought.

In the evening people began to gather in the playground of the school. The headmaster Chong Jin Gu, too, came in his *turumagi;* he had not had time to change because he had only just returned from the county seat where he had been on business. The schoolroom was brightly lit. The whole school guild was assembled. Ho Gi Son was crouching in a corner, his head bent. The people were looking anxiously at Kim Hyong Jik. He started to speak calmly.

"I called this unexpected meeting in order to discuss an urgent matter...."

The audience's anxiety increased. Kim Hyong Jik gave a detailed account of what had happened to Ho Gi Son's family. There were whispers and clickings of the tongues in the room.

"...This is roughly how the matter stands now. This is not only the question whether our school is going to lose a pupil, it is also a serious problem which concerns the family of Mr. Ho Gi Son, a member of our school guild. When we formed the guild, we pledged that we members would pool our efforts and help each other to run the school and that we would share

hardships or sorrows. So I'd like to consult with you about how to help Mr. Ho Gi Son's family out of these dire straits. Please express your views."

As Kim Hyong Jik concluded, there was a great stir among the audience. Some of them talked heatedly with angry faces and others sighed with grief as if the misfortune was their own.

"God damn him. He must have been hatching this plot since he came back from Pyongyang. The crook!..." roared the old Chong Jin Gu, slapping the top of the desk. His beard trembled. He sprang to his feet. He could not repress his fury. Looking over at Kim Hyong Jik with shining eyes, the old man said:

"There's no need for any consultation. Let me go see him right now. I'll throw two ten *won* notes in his face and spit on him!"

Chong Jin Gu was already making for the door, adjusting the skirt of his ramie *turumagi*.

"Mr. headmaster!"

Kim Hyong Jik's calm voice checked the old man.

"I understand how indignant you are. But please calm down a bit. Since all the members are here now, wouldn't it be better to have a discussion and reach agreement before we take any action?"

Chong Jin Gu looked at Kim Hyong Jik and the audience and returned reluctantly to his seat.

"But what can we do? He has the sword and money. What's more, the villagers are living on his land.... He's hateful all right, but I think we'd better raise the 20 *won* and hand it to him," someone said in undertone from a corner.

"The headmaster shouldn't pay all the money. The guild has some funds, so we'd better take the money from there for now and each member will bear it jointly later. How about that?" This was Chun Bo's suggestion.

"That's a good idea...."

One member after another expressed his approval.

"Damn it! How shocking! He lent five *won* and is now asking for 20 *won*! And even wants to take his only daughter for the debt? This cursed world is really topsy-turvy!" Choe Sok Man, seated beside Chun Bo, burst out in anger.

"We all of us in this village owe money to that bastard; and so does every family in Sangbami, Chungbami and Maekjon plain and the rest of the neighbouring villages. I'm afraid

my debts will multiply to several hundred *ryang* this autumn. I pay off debts every autumn. I empty my purse to pay interest but the debts just increase...."

Comments were exchanged in every corner with sighs of despair.

Kim Hyong Jik who had watched this scene without a word said, "Allow me to put my view." The whole room became quiet. "The headmaster and some of you have expressed views that do offer us a solution. But we mustn't act that way. For it would mean that our school guild and our whole village will be bowing under an entirely unjust and beastly act by Pak Byong Tae. And once we bow to him, you can't tell what brazen outrages he will commit and then we shall have to surrender to him every time. As someone said just now, most families in this village owe him money. We must take advantage of this occasion; we must take it out on the fellow who commits cruelties with Japanese support."

"Take it out on him?" asked somebody. The guild members watched Kim Hyong Jik, speechless.

"Mr. Kim is right, if only we could take it out on him." Choe Sok Man nodded as if talking to himself.

"But how could we?" wondered Chun Bo, turning to Choe Sok Man.

Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"If Mr. Ho Gi Son were alone, he would be powerless. But if we members here unite, we will be able to find a way and have enough strength. Let us see how the case started. See what Pak Byong Tae has done. No human being would do it...."

The members pricked their ears.

"No human being, even if he had no conscience, would loan five *won* to an ailing man at an annual interest of 100 per cent, although he would not lend the money for nothing. The 100 per cent interest is so grossly against human morality that even in the wickedest countries it is against the law. However, Pak Byong Tae does it without a prick of conscience, sucking man's blood and stripping off his skin. Moreover, in this particular case, he took advantage of Sun Hui's illness and of Mr. Ho Gi Son's illiteracy—which is a misfortune—for his vicious fraud. Having shackled Ho Gi Son this way, Pak has bled him white for three years. Every year Mr. Ho Gi Son took bundles of rice straw to Pak Byong Tae's, thatching his fences, cattle shed, and open sheds and expanding his storage houses. Besides,

Pak Byong Tae has often called up Mr. Ho Gi Son like his own servant, working him hard for various jobs. Mr. Ho has done twice as much work as should be needed to write off the interest and the principal."

"Now I can see how matters stand...."

"He is the most vicious swine I've ever seen."

People whispered, turning to Ho Gi Son who sat silent in the corner, his head bowed.

Then Kim Hyong Jik went on to say:

"But he is still not satisfied. Now he is plotting to take Sun Hui away for the debt. What sort of man is Pak Byong Tae? He was a petty official of the office of Kangdong County in the last days of Korean rule. He took advantage of our country's ruin, to amass money by exploiting the people with Jap help. He purchased lots of land cheaply in Naedong and other parts of Koup from the 'Government-General' during the so-called 'official sale', land that had been tilled by your families for many generations. These facts you know better than I do. On top of that, the fellow had hired Mr. Ho Gi Son and his wife for years and worked them cruelly. One cold winter day, he forced Mr. Ho's wife to go to the riverside to do the washing though she was in the final month of pregnancy. Her child was born beside a water hole on the ice-bound river. When she became dangerously ill, Pak Byong Tae and his father drove the couple out into the field in a blizzard...."

Kim Hyong Jik stopped trying to hold back his fury. There was dead silence in the room. The faces were petrified. Ho Gi Son's shoulders were heaving slightly.

"If we remain onlookers to Pak Byong Tae's vicious act or yield to his thieving demand for payment, cringe to him, can we still claim that there are real men in Naedong village?"

At this very moment Chun Bo seated in the front row called out, "Mr. Kim—" His face was flushing crimson. "You are absolutely right. We were as stupid as a lynx."

Chun Bo was so infuriated that he could not go on.

"What are we going to do, sir? Let's go and beat the hell out of him!" roared Choe Sok Man. The room began to boil.

"My idea is this."

Kim Hyong Jik was going to continue but there was still a great stir among the excited people.

"Let's hear what Mr. Kim is going to say."

Only when Chong Jin Gu said this, did the room become

quiet.

"We should pick out deputies to negotiate with Pak Byong Tae. Let us return him the principal sum, five *won* and get that I.O.U. If he won't yield, we will lay bare his fiendish crimes and rouse the whole village to drive him into a tight corner."

The whole audience agreed. Kim Hyong Jik explained the exact way to conduct the negotiations with the landlord. The meeting elected Chong Jin Gu, So Chun Bo and Choe Sok Man as deputies and Kim Hyong Jik briefed the three men on how to deal with Pak Byong Tae, how to get at his weak spots and force him to his wit's end. The three deputies went off on their mission.

"I'm afraid I'm causing trouble, sir...," said Ho Gi Son apologetically to Kim Hyong Jik who was seeing off the deputation into the exterior darkness.

"Trouble? What do you mean by trouble? Stop worrying. Go to bed and sleep," said Kim Hyong Jik, now quite composed and smiling.

7

"I've been patient with you folk, but you really are incredible people, intruding into another man's home at this hour, sticking your noses into other people's business. Confound it! Get the hell out of here, will you?"

Chong Jin Gu had spoken first, Chun Bo and Sok Man sitting silently in a corner. But now they, too, began to speak. As Chong Jin Gu had exposed Pak Byong Tae's crime before the two villagers, Pak had been taken aback and irritated. And now even Chun Bo and Sok Man joined in the indictment, Pak Byong Tae burst out in wrath mingled with shame.

"What's the matter with you, lord? Sticking our noses into other people's business? I said Brother Ho Gi Son is a member of our school guild, didn't I? What if you ask us to sell my Yong Chun or Chun Bo's Gap Dol or Byong Chil's Gomannyo into your service for debts? Where the devil is the law that allows you to buy people with money? Now drop your idea and accept the principal, five *won,* and return the

I.O.U."

Choe Sok Man was eloquent and firmly insisted.

"Wha-a-t?!"

Pak Byong Tae's anger reached the limit and could not speak another word, his eyes goggling. After some moments he turned to Chong Jin Gu.

"Why do you, a gentleman, join these fellows, these village beggars and meddle in affairs that have nothing whatsoever to do with you? Are you in your dotage?"

"What?!"

The old man's face was red and hot. He had been trying hard to control his indignation.

"Don't blurt out stupid things just because you've got a mouth. So in your eyes those honest villagers are all beggars, and sane folks dotards, eh? Surely you must know that you've done a filthy, beastly thing that no one with a human skin would even think of doing." Chong Jin Gu's beard trembled violently, he could not suppress his anger.

"What's that you say? No one with a human skin?" shrieked Pak Byong Tae, his face white with anger.

"Oh, what's the matter with you? All the villagers might well come here to find out what's going on. This is not the first time for you, lord, to have called us villagers beggars. Don't get so excited. Let's talk quietly and make an agreement. The headmaster made a reasonable suggestion. Even if you raised a racket throughout the whole of this village, throughout the whole Maekjon plain, nobody who has a mouth would praise you. So calm yourself and talk quietly, angry though you are. Nobody is blackmailing you into donating money; you've worked Ho Gi Son very hard, more than enough to pay off the interest. And we are offering to pay the principal, so you won't lose a penny. Instead of making such a noise and telling the whole village all about it, you'd be better off to keep quiet and accept our offer."

Choe Sok Man spoke so eloquently and convincingly that Chun Bo stared at him in admiration.

There is a saying that when a woman is beaten by her mother-in-law she will hate the sister-in-law more who tries to stop her. And Pak Byong Tae got angrier at Choe. And yet, the remarks made by Chong Jin Gu and Choe Sok Man did prick Pak's conscience. This made Pak angrier still.

"God damn you. I'll have you all thrown in jail tomorrow." Pak Byong Tae shouted in his fury, glaring horribly.

"What's the matter with you, lord? Did I commit a crime? Did I come to destroy your stores? I've come here to pay you back your money. Surely, no law, however strict, will condemn me for that, will it?"

"Oh, shut your dirty mouth, you overbearing ass!" Big veins stood out on the furious landlord's neck.

Choe Sok Man and Chun Bo stared at him. Their eyes met, burning with hostility. The two peasants were gasping, their shoulders heaving. Had it not been for Kim Hyong Jik's warning, the two peasants might simply have beaten the landlord to a pulp. But they managed to control that itch. They remembered Kim Hyong Jik's advice not to give him any pretext, for anything or any way to justify himself. At this moment, the old man Chong Jin Gu's stern voice called to Pak Byong Tae who winced under the old man's glare.

"Your behaviour makes you look more and more disgusting and ridiculous. However great your lust for money and power, you are still inside a human skin, aren't you? And you'll have to keep it on if you want to go on living."

"Why, you old man...."

Pak Byong Tae was at a loss what to say.

"I feel so much like vomiting that I can't sit here any longer. Give us your answer. What are you going to do? Are you going to dispose of the matter reasonably as we advise or not? Yes or no?"

Pak Byong Tae seemed to have been cowed by the sharp glare of the three men and stared at them without a word. The excitement in Pak's face had cooled off. There was an icy look under his slightly wrinkled eyelids.

"And what can you do if I said no?"

"We'll just send you 20 *won* tomorrow morning, and take the I.O.U. But...."

"But what?"

"But tomorrow morning we'll gather all the folks of Naedong, Sangbami and Chungbami to read out that unusual document of yours," Chong Jin Gu declared.

"The.... What do you mean?..."

Pak Byong Tae was utterly confused.

"Once upon a time, there was a goblin stick, but your I.O.U. is rarer than that. So we'll pay even two thousand *ryang*

for it just to exhibit it to all. That was agreed at the school guild meeting," said Choe Sok Man again interfering. Chong Jin Gu continued.

"We'll get our 20 *won*'s worth. We will lay bare your cruelty to Ho Gi Son's family and all the monstrous things you've done, sucking up people's sweat and blood like a leech. And after that don't complain if your back is broken by any stick."

"And we'll tell them how when you lived in Kangdong you took away a debtor's wife and sold her to get your money back." Chun Bo broke his long silence. This was a hard blow to Pak Byong Tae.

"What's that?" screamed Pak, bouncing with fury. But he looked down in the mouth, his voice shaking.

"Let's go." And Chong Jin Gu rose first.

"Let's go," the other two followed.

Pak Byong Tae watched them go with glaring eyes. Only when he heard the door shut, did he start up in a flurry.

"Where the hell are you lot going? You thugs! Why do you poke your noses into others' business? Just a moment. I can't just leave them alone, those robber fellows. I must inform on them to the police. Hey, Duk Bu—" shrieked Pak, kicking the sliding door on the veranda.

"Duk Bu—"

He cried out again. There was a reply and the sound of footsteps. Duk Bu stood in the light shining out of the room.

"Run to Maekjon ferry right away and...."

But Pak Byong Tae hesitated. What could he say to the police? There had been a robbery? Hardly. Only his anger rose up. He kicked the sliding door and slammed it shut.

Pak Byong Tae could not sleep a wink that night, unable to cool his wrath. He had always dominated the village without any trouble. Suddenly there was a school guild which stood in his way like a cliff. Judging from what they were doing these days, that guild seemed to be confident and dynamic enough to shift the whole village to the top of Mt. Ponghwa-san in one go.

How can I beat them and realize my ambitions? He thought. My pride will not allow me to compromise over Ho Gi Son's debt. I'll have to get that slut Sun Hui whatever happens. He sat up, laid down or tossed and turned in bed but he did not

come up with any bright idea. They say they will pay the full sum, and then gather together all the villagers and show them the I.O.U., and tell them the whole story and there is nothing you can do to stop them either. What's more even Chong Jin Gu has sided with the mob, and this is a real headache, because of his reputation—he is one of the most influential men in this part of the country.

The cock crowed, fluttering. Oh, how noisily it crows, he thought. The windows were getting pale. Pak's heart was burning with anxiety.

Suddenly he heard the resonant sound of the bugle from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Pak Byong Tae sat up in bed quickly. He had headache because he had not been able to sleep all night, and the powerful notes of the bugle made him feel as if his head would burst.

Children's shouts were heard and the bugle sounded out still louder.

Pak Byong Tae groaned. Suddenly he felt as if it were this bugle that had driven him into this corner. Naedong village had been so quiet, but from the day the bugle first sounded, it had awoken from its drowsiness; they had started to rebuild the school, formed the school guild and busied themselves with other activities, and now they were even trying to choke Pak himself. How could they have thought of resisting him like that? He could not understand it however hard he tried. Everything was black before his eyes, at the thought of his imminent danger.

What is to be done? Pak wondered. When they bring me 20 *won,* I'll have to give them the I.O.U. Then, the whole village will be called to a meeting and the case exposed and the ignoramuses may rise up—the very thought of it gave him goose pimples. And if the news spreads to the county seat and to Pyongyang? The hopes for which I have invested so much money will fizzle out.... Need I ruin myself because of that damned I.O.U. for a ridiculous five *won*? But I'm choking with anger. It can't be helped, though. I'll have to compromise this once.

Pak Byong Tae called Choe in and told the clerk to go and throw the I.O.U. into Ho Gi Son's house. The landlord looked as if he had just swallowed a bitter pill. Choe did not understand what his master meant and only blinked.

"What the hell are you still standing there for, you idiot?

Be off, I tell you." The landlord vented his anger at the clerk, like a daughter-in-law kicking a dog's belly to vent her spite against her mother-in-law.

"Then shall I bring Sun Hui here?"

"You stupid ass! Accept the principal and throw the I.O.U. in his face! Oh, hell, you don't even know how the wind blows."

Choe was still more confused but as his master screamed again, he winced and hurried out.

"One, two! One, two!..."

Vigorous shouts of command came from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Pak Byong Tae was in a meditative mood, narrowing his eyes. He had an illusion that everything had happened in answer to those shouted commands. Maybe that was not an illusion. That Kim Hyong Jik might have been the wirepuller in the Ho Gi Son case. If he had taken the initiative in building up the school and organizing the school guild, he must have been involved in this case. Suspicion deepened in Pak's mind. As for Chong Jin Gu, Pak had never been intimate with him; they seldom met or talked. That old man had never cared a whit about Pak's doings. Chong Jin Gu might be well known in the Kangdong area as a man of noble character and integrity, but he lacked the ability to manipulate like that. As for the ignorant village peasants, they would not have been able to work out how to hit Pak in his most vulnerable spot; and even if they could, they would never have had the courage to go into a direct confrontation with Pak. So the instigator must be the Kim Hyong Jik who was now calling out those commands. Gradually his speculations turned to conviction.

So what sort of man was he? On the evening of the day when Kim Hyong Jik arrived at the village, Pak Byong Tae had met him at Chong Jin Gu's, and his countenance was still vivid in Pak's mind. Pak sought the clue in all that Kim Hyong Jik had done so far, but could not find it. Pak Byong Tae racked his brains to grasp who that school teacher really was and how to counteract him. He was now resolved to show Kim Hyong Jik in his true colours, and that would best be done by making closer contact with the teacher, pretending to cooperate with him in running the school and watching him closely, hand in glove with the police.

After breakfast, Pak Byong Tae called on Kim Hyong Jik at Chong Jin Gu's. Pak apologized him for having gone too far the previous night and excused himself; he had wanted Sun Hui out of sympathy for Ho Gi Son; he had intended to keep her to Pyongyang for two or three years to make her more refined and get her well married, but the deputies of the school guild had not understood his real intentions and frightened him so much that Pak had been furious.

Then Pak Byong Tae went straight to the county seat of Kangdong. He met the chief of the thought control section at the police station. Before meeting him Pak had thought he had a lot of complaints to make but, face to face with the chief, he had little to say. If he told him about the latest affair, the chief would simply laugh at him. So he made a detailed report: Kim Hyong Jik, the new teacher in his village had built up the school and formed the school guild in order to win popularity, which was suspicious; it seemed that he was giving the pupils seditious ideas. The chief of the thought control section had listened attentively, expecting some important piece of information, so when Pak had finished, he said, looking disappointed.

"Hi, hi, hi. So what do you want me to do to Teacher Kim, Mr. Pak?"

"Well, I mean ...er... I mean he is a doubtful character, so the authorities had better look out and take thorough precautions against him."

"Hm, I understand. Anyhow we'll make an inspection since a new teacher has come and built a school in your village. I hope you'll also watch him closely and bring us more substantial information. When you were amassing your money you were zealous in helping us, but now that you have got a fortune, you don't even look at us. We are not happy about that. Once the independence movement breaks out full scale, your troubles will be the same as ours. Understand?"

"Yes,—I beg your pardon, sir."

8

"...Our school guild beat Pak Byong Tae this time. It's only a small achievement, but it has given us a valuable lesson...."

That evening Kim Hyong Jik spoke to the assembled members of the school guild in his classroom and analyzed the way they had saved Ho Gi Son's family. At a first sight, as he said, it was only a small, insignificant victory. However, he estimated it very highly. For through this victory it was possible to convince the people in Naedong and around of the power of solidarity and organization. Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"Let's look back at the past. At first, we peasants, poor and oppressed, did not dare to build a school to educate our children. But as we joined our efforts, formed the guild and buckled down to the job, we found we could manage our school perfectly well. That is true of this latest incident, too. If the whole village hadn't united around the school guild and squarely confronted Pak Byong Tae, we could not have cornered Pak and saved Ho Gi Son's family. How mighty solidarity and organization are! We have no country of our own, we have no rights; we are poor folks who have no land or money; we have nobody in this world to help us. The only thing we have is our own united strength. But that united strength of the masses is the greatest, most formidable force in the world. The success we have won this time shows that if we are more firmly united as one man, we can achieve great things, anything we want to."

The people listened attentively and seriously. Chong Jin Gu nodded, watching Kim Hyong Jik closely. He had an impression that Kim Hyong Jik was not just a teacher engaged in the enlightenment movement. Hearing his highly significant comments now, Chong Jin Gu became convinced that his impression had been correct.

"You are right, sir. When I sat face to face with Pak the landlord my heart beat wildly and my tongue froze and it wouldn't move as I wished. Then I told to myself, 'What the

hell should I fear? If I fail the whole village will rise up.' And you know that made my tongue run on wheels." Choe Sok Man spoke with a great fervour.

"Yes, he hit out the landlord Pak so hard that he didn't know what to do, he just bounced up and down, up and down, like a mortar. Ha, ha, ha."

Chun Bo's remarks provoked a burst of laughter. Kim Hyong Jik too laughed cheerily. There was a hubbub for some moments.

"Now, everybody! Let's discuss a thing or two before we disperse."

The audience fell silent again.

"Pak Byong Tae yielded to our school guild. But he has the support of the Japanese authorities, and he has money, land and power. So we never can tell by what wicked things he will do to retaliate. So we must take countermeasures."

"You are right, sir."

"Please tell us what to do."

The audience waited with a strained look.

"I propose that we build up the school guild and, at the same time, form a local guild which is wider in scope. All villagers will be able to join this guild. This will increase the strength of the villagers and unite them still more firmly; it will enable us to help each other and deal with any problems big and small that concern the village as we did with this case."

Kim Hyong Jik mentioned the need for and the ways and means to form a local guild. Having been so successful in their confrontation with Pak Byong Tae, the villagers unanimously approved the idea.

"Lastly, I would like to say a few more words," Kim Hyong Jik went on. "As Mr. Ho Gi Son's case shows, if you are unlettered, you will always be blind fools. If you can't read, you will always be cheated by the Japs and fellows like Pak Byong Tae in the future, too. And if you learn how to write and acquire knowledge and thought, you'll be better united and do bigger things in the future, with clear prospects."

Ho Gi Son who had been seated in the rear dropped his flushed face. Everybody nodded gravely.

"Sir, we'll do all we can to build up the school guild and form local guild. But isn't it a bit late in the day for us to start learning to read and write?" Chun Bo was embarrassed.

"Let's start evening classes," said Kim Hyong Jik.

"Evening classes?... But aren't we too old to learn now?"

"If we buckle down to it, and grit our teeth, we'll be able to read at least I.O.U.s...." The room was animated.

"But, Mr. Kim, how can you manage to teach us at night after the youngsters have worn you to a frazzle in the day?" asked Chong Jin Gu in a worried voice; he had been watching Kim Hyong Jik, touched by his altruist proposal.

"Oh, don't worry about that. It is a teacher's duty to teach the unlettered. That's no trouble. Now, let's discuss the details...."

Kim Hyong Jik was overflowing with energy and determination.

They went into detail about how to set up the local guild and run the evening classes and every member was assigned a definite task. Invigorated by hope, and still talking, the people went out into the dark.

For a while Kim Hyong Jik stood in the deserted room alone. His eyes fell on Sun Hui's desk in the third row. He was deep in thought. His far-reaching plan was being carried out step by step in the desired direction and he felt an increasing burden on his shoulders as his cause progressed, but his pride, ardour and conviction also multiplied.

Kim Hyong Jik looked up. On the opposite wall he saw the frame containing the characters *Chiwon* that he had written himself. Greater energy seemed to glow in his eyes.

As soon as he had returned from Seoul where he had handled some difficult problems, Kim Hyong Jik had gone straight into this fight, and from this small success, he had gained valuable experience. During his latest guidance tour, he had been able to put straight his comrades' deviations. Now the struggle to win comrades was on the right track, and on his way back from Seoul he had thought about new tasks that needed to be tackled without delay as soon as this struggle reached a certain stage.

When he had reached Pyongyang on the night train, Kim Hyong Jik had had an idea of forming the national organization immediately, but now he was inclined to be more cautious. He thought it better to intensify the work to win over comrades. Winning his small battle in Naedong village had needed the united action of the people. How much more would this be needed for an independence movement that must arouse

a whole nation.

We must train new independence fighters from among the masses, he thought. There are few comrades coming from among the working people, such as Hong Jun Gol. I should step up the struggle to rally comrades instead of being in a hurry to form an organization. To do this, our comrades' next task must be to go to the masses. We should enlighten them with patriotism against Japan and bring up new, dependable comrades from among them. Past independence movements failed to do this, that's why they were destined to vanish like bubbles in the sea....

Kim Hyong Jik put out the lamp and went outside.

The night was far advanced and the Milky Way stretched across the dark blue summer sky. He walked slowly, filling his lungs with fresh air. He thought he would inculcate patriotism, enmity towards Japan into the minds of the villagers in the evening classes and spread his great ideas among them; pick out the staunch ones and train them to take part in the independence movement. He mentally selected Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and Chong Jin Gu as right for the purpose.

He left the school ground and was on the path to the well, when he heard a girl's frail, tearful voice calling his name. He stopped and looked round. Several shadows approached.

"Mr. Kim!" It was a girl's tearful cry. Kim Hyong Jik recognized Sun Hui who ran up and clung to him.

"Why did you come out at this hour of the night? And why, your father and mother?"

Holding the girl's shoulders firmly, Kim Hyong Jik looked at Ho Gi Son and his wife standing before him.

"Sir!" Sun Hui's mother called in a quivering voice. "We'll never forget what you did for us...."

Sun Hui's mother was so deeply moved that she could not finish her words; she knelt down, and bowed low, her hands on the ground. Kim Hyong Jik was embarrassed.

"Oh, my, what are you doing? Do get up."

He took her arm to raise her from the ground.

"Mr. Kim, we decided that if Sun Hui was taken away, we'd throw ourselves into the Yolpa-gang River... and then you saved us.... We don't know how to repay you for your great

kindness," said Ho Gi Son standing beside her in a choked voice, bowing too. Kim Hyong Jik looked at them without a word. He could see their wet eyes in the dim starlight. His heart was full, too, and tears welled up involuntarily. But he smiled.

"I had little to do with it. It was the members of the school guild who united and worked hard. That's whom you should thank. Well, it's late, go home now. Come, I'll walk you home. Let's go, Sun Hui."

Kim Hyong Jik took Sun Hui's hand and led the way. When they arrived at Sun Hui's house, Ho Gi Son and his wife would not go in, and Kim Hyong Jik did not feel like parting with them. He would like to spend the evening chatting with them. Still holding Sun Hui's hand, Kim Hyong Jik walked into the yard. They sat down in a circle on straw matting spread on the earthen bank. Smoke was rising from the brazier where green wormwood was burning to keep off the mosquitoes. The smell was unusually fragrant.

Ho Gi Son started a desultory conversation on how he used to work as a servant in Kangdong for Pak Byong Tae and how brutal Pak had been when he was a petty official at the county office.

Kim Hyong Jik told them about the situation in the world. He explained that the Korean populace was suffering all sorts of misfortune and misery because they had lost their country to the Japs and because the landlords and pro-Japanese lackeys oppressed and exploited them, and that therefore, in order to knock down the Japs and landlords and build a country where everybody could live happily, Sun Hui's father and mother, the poor folks like them, those who suffered most from Japanese aggression and the exploitation of the rich, must rise up and fight.

"You mean folks like us?"

Ho Gi Son looked surprised.

"Yes, the poor people like yourself, Mr. Ho, must drive out the Japanese and build our country. As to the nobility and the rich, they don't suffer much even if the country is in ruins. And they won't try to reclaim the country. What is worse, they are all becoming running dogs for the Japs just like Pak Byong Tae. So who will liberate the country?"

"You are right, sir,... But how can folks like us liberate the country?..."

"Ha, ha, ha. You said just now that if Sun Hui was taken

away you'd both decided to drown yourselves in the Yolpagang River. If you are ready to face death, why kill yourselves? If you fight the Japs desperately, not afraid of death, you can reclaim the country."

"But it's the independence fighters who do the fighting. We are only countryfolk...."

"No one is born an independence fighter, for your Sun Hui and you, her father and mother, can take part in the independence movement once you are resolved to do so."

"But how?"

Sun Hui's mother's eyes were wide with astonishment.

"Yes, you too. You must have courage and start by coming to the evening classes from tomorrow. First you need knowledge. Surely there's more to learning letters than just reading I.O.U.'s? Let's learn and work together with one great aim—to throw the Japs out of here and build a new nation where the poor people are the masters, where they can live well. Sun Hui, you bring your parents to the school tomorrow night, all right?"

As he said this, Kim Hyong Jik put his hand on the shoulder of Sun Hui who was sitting close by him.

"I will, sir." Sun Hui replied, raising her clear eyes.

"I'll come to the evening classes, sir. I don't think I shall be much use, but I'd go to the end of the earth, if you asked me to."

"You'll learn all right. Nothing is impossible to a determined mind, as the saying goes. Sun Hui, do you remember the story of the Kabo Peasant War I told you the other day?" Kim Hyong Jik turned to Sun Hui abruptly.

"Yes, I do, sir."

"Then tell it to your father and mother."

"Me?"

Sun Hui blushed. But her serene eyes were alight.

"Yes, you...."

Blinking her sparkling eyes Sun Hui sat remembering for a few moments before beginning to tell the story in a cheerful voice. The stars shone brighter in the dark blue sky. The smoke of smouldering wormwoods rose heavily from the brazier.

From the next evening the bell began to ring for even-

ing classes. Men, young and middle-aged, married and unmarried women, they all came to school, their books under their arms. Their voices reading out the Korean alphabet could be heard late into the night. But they were not just voices reading aloud, they were the shouts of the awakening Korean masses who had embarked on the great road to national liberation opened up by Kim Hyong Jik.

A few days after the evening classes opened, Kim Sok Ha came from Seoul. Kim Hyong Jik was very glad to find that his wound had nearly healed. Kim Sok Ha was deeply ashamed because he had failed to do his duty properly and had thus caused a disaster. Kim Hyong Jik received a message from Maeng Gyong Jae saying that the situation in Seoul had been improved and was now satisfactory. For several days Kim Hyong Jik lived with Kim Sok Ha, teaching the young man how to conduct his future activity, drawing lessons from his past work underground. Kim Hyong Jik assigned him a new task, working in the Chunggang and Linkiang areas on the northern border and then in Peking and Shanghai. He did this for the purpose of summing up the work done so far by the comrades in these areas and to consult on the policies of the intensified movement so as to develop the work more vigorously.

Kim Sok Ha started out on his long journey, his courage redoubled.

9

There was a small restaurant in a back-alley of the busy quarter of Pusan. Two people were sitting face to face in a corner room on the second floor. One was a gentleman in his thirties, with a fine moustache, tortoise-shell-rimmed glasses and navy blue autumn suit. The other who looked much younger wore a black *turumagi* of cotton serge. There were several dishes on the table, but they were not eating much, they were talking quietly.

"...You must draw a lesson from the last failure of Mr. Kim Sok Ha. You must be prudent in your judgements and must deal with any matter in accordance with our basic line," said

the gentleman in the navy blue.

"I see," answered the young man in *turumagi,* calmly.

"But don't become passive and simply keep things going," the gentleman went on. "Once you have decided to do something, you must push ahead with energy and daring."

"Please don't worry, sir. When we were first told about Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's plan, we felt as if we had just opened our eyes; we got excited and acted hastily. But, now that we have heard his teaching again and grasped its full meaning, I am confident in my job. By the way, er... Mr. Kang Jin Sok." The young man faltered for a little while, looking up at Kang Jin Sok disguised as a gentleman.

"Go on."

"Well, when you meet Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, will you please tell him that we, his comrades in the Ryongnam area, hope that the national political organization he has been contemplating will be formed as soon as possible."

"Yes, I will. I am of the same opinion. In the meantime, as we discussed at the meeting last night, you comrades here should make more substantial efforts to carry on your work to rally comrades and educate the masses. I hope you will concentrate on the areas which still remain untapped."

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Well, I think it is time I was off," said Kang Jin Sok, rising.

The young man, too, rose after him and, taking a slip of paper out from inside his *turumagi,* gave it to the gentleman, saying, "Here is your steamboat ticket, sir."

"Thank you," said Kang Jin Sok, pressing both the young man's hands, "don't come to see me off. Be careful, and keep safe."

"Yes, sir. And you take care of yourself."

The young man's voice shook a little, he could not suppress his sadness at the parting.

Kang Jin Sok went down the wooden stairs of the restaurant. The youth went over to a small window facing the street and looked out. Kang Jin Sok walked away down the crowded street unhurriedly. The tops of the trees along the street leading to the bund were already touched by autumn colours. The youth watched Kang Jin Sok, full of deep emotion.

This young man was Yun Sam. He was responsible for

guiding the activities of all the comrades in the provinces of Kyongsang. Now he recalled what had happened when Kang Jin Sok came to his province three months ago.

Yun Sam was Kim Sok Ha's childhood friend; they were from the same village. As they grew up, they shared a sense of indignation for their country's plight. Kim Sok Ha had left the village several years ago and nothing had been heard of him. Then one day, he showed up from nowhere, calling on Yun Sam. He told him that there was an outstanding leader called Kim Hyong Jik, who was opening up new prospects for the Korean independence movement. And he could not conceal his excitement as he said this, and he shook Yun Sam by both hands. Told about Kim Hyong Jik's great plan for national independence, Yun Sam, too, was deeply moved. Then and there he gave his word to fight with them. Next day Kim Sok Ha left, for he was in a hurry to meet and tell his friends in the provinces of Kyongsang about the new plan.

A month passed, then two. Now it was summer, but no word had come from Kim Sok Ha. One day at midnight in the dreary rainy season, someone knocked at his door, there were two men standing outside in the rain. They said detectives were closing in on him, and asked him to come with them right away. Yun Sam slipped into his clothes and ran up the hill behind his house. Before they reached the top they heard a ferocious barking of dogs, the sound of whistles and men shouting down in the village.

Yun Sam and his party went into a cave where they built a fire and dried their clothes. It was only then that he found out how it had all happened. Kim Sok Ha had narrowly escaped death after making a blunder in South Kyongsang Province. And Kang Jin Sok came to save the situation. Accompanied by one of his old comrades, he had called one by one on those who had joined hands with Kim Sok Ha and that evening he had arrived at the township where he heard that the county police station had found out that Kim Sok Ha had been to this part of the country and had decided to raid and arrest Yun Sam that very night. So he had gone straight to Yun Sam to warn him of the imminent danger, and Yun Sam had got away. In the ensuing three months he had worked underground with Kang Jin Sok, travelling to towns and villages of North and South Kyongsang Provinces.

They had a tough time, sleeping in the open, in the fields

and mountains, to hide from the enemy. Sometimes they were pursued by the enemy and went without food. But they worked hard, always remaining faithful to the revolutionary cause, which enabled them to save the situation and recruit new comrades. The enemy's watch was especially strict in the counties where Kim Sok Ha was known to have been.

But they had always been informed of the danger in time by their comrades and so had escaped to safety. Fortunately, the previous night ten or more comrades had met at a house in the street near the wharf in Pusan port.

Now, Kang Jin Sok was gone. Yun Sam wondered if he could cope with the uphill task by himself. He felt sure that if he put the whole of himself into the work he would be able to carry out his assignment, since he had Kim Hyong Jik's intelligent teaching and guidance.

Kang Jin Sok had already turned the corner of the tree-lined street and was out of sight. He would go on to Mokpo, Cholla Province, by boat and guide the activities of the comrades there. His inexhaustible energy and fighting spirit aroused Yun Sam's admiration.

"Please don't worry about us. Have a good journey." Yun Sam whispered to himself, as he turned away from the window.

Kang Jin Sok walked on, looking at the narrow street where various types of two- or three-storeyed Japanese and European buildings stood cheek by jowl. Firms, banks, corporations, and restaurants had hung out shields in all shapes and sizes. Though in Korea, Pusan street was disgustingly exotic. This port town had been taken over by the Japanese as a commercial settlement fifty years ago. Rickshaws, carts and cabs surged up and down the street.

The street depressed Kang Jin Sok.

Beyond the far end was the clear, high blue autumn sky melted into the vast expanse of sea.

Kang Jin Sok stopped walking. He stood dazed, instead of going into the harbour compound. The harbour was much more congested than the streets. The wide yard was piled high with stacks of grain, around which stevedores swarmed, lifting rice sacks and apple boxes on their shoulders and moving ahead heavily, in single file. Whole strings of stevedores crisscrossed between the stacks and landing stages.

There were many gigantic steamers at the piers, their

bulging bellies up against the stages ready to swallow up huge mountains, their Japanese flags fluttering in the autumn wind. The files of dockers crawled up dizzily high gangplanks. Climbing to the top, the coolies would suddenly vanish from sight, as if they had fallen into traps. The mountains of rice sacks and apple boxes shrank fast as endless lines of the coolies were sucked into the ships that looked as insatiable as the legendary monster said to have swallowed a whole sea in one gulp.

Suddenly a shrill whistle sounded behind Kang Jin Sok. He turned around to see a locomotive chuffing down the shunting track, with a long trail of goods wagons behind. The train pulled up where the mountains of rice bags had been piled up just before; and as the doors of the wagons opened, the stevedores picked up their loads directly from the wagons and carried them to the landing stage.

As he watched the scene, Kang Jin Sok's face became rigid. His large eyes glared with anger. His thick eyebrows bristled and twitched.

"So you are taking everything away from us...," he groaned out under his breath. It looked as if all the blood and cream of the country were being sucked away. Kang Jin Sok felt himself squeezed, as if someone was sucking the blood out of his own body. His hand holding his bag trembled. Everything went black before his eyes, he felt dizzy. He shut his eyes and calmed himself. Presently he opened his eyes and went on slowly towards the quay. It was a pitiable sight to see the strings of coolies walking unsteadily under their heavy burdens. They were labouring to carry these stolen goods for the robbers, their backs bent with the heavy work. Among those coolies there might well be peasants who had grown and harvested the rice and apples this year. Do they know this? It is impossible that they do not know. They are driven to work here by dire necessity; if they don't, gulping down the tears of blood, they cannot feed their families who are on the brink of starvation. Kang Jin Sok walked on with a heavy heart.

Then a loud chorus started up of mooing cows from somewhere near. Kang Jin Sok stopped and looked back. Another long goods train was pulling into the yard. The wagons were opened and cattle jumped down, mooing. Overseers in black Japanese half-length coats were goading the cattle on, whipping them on the back; the animals, bewildered at the

strange scene in the port, were at a loss which way to go. In no time hundreds of cattle were hustled together, mooing plaintively as the Japs drove the herd towards the quay. The cattle moved past in front of Kang Jin Sok, walking reluctantly. Their fleshy breasts, backs and thighs heaved, rocking and swaying as they moved forward. They cast their vacant wide-open eyes timidly on the steamers lying in wait.

Involuntarily, Kang Jin Sok followed the herd. Suddenly, he heard a metallic rattling overhead. He looked up to see a mountainous hull before him. The rattling reminded him of a wild beast grinding its teeth, which gave him goose pimples. The long arm of a crane came out over the gunwale and rose slowly against the azure sky. An iron cage suspended on a cable at the end of the arm was lowered to the quay. The Japanese overseers descended like a flock of crows and drove the cattle into the cage. When five or six beasts had been goaded in, the crane hoisted it high in the air, with a hollow rattling, the caged cattle were thrown around terrified. An ox mooed sadly, and was followed by others.

The sight was too much for him, it made his heart bleed. Why should these cattle be loaded into a Japanese ship, moaning so mournfully? They ought to be grazing on a green hillock by a stream lined with weeping willows, mooing peacefully, emphasizing the pastoral charms of our rural landscape. Oh, you blue heavens, why are silent? You too are heartless.

Again and again the cage came down to lift up more beasts. The three huge funnels of the ship belched columns of black smoke. Now, under a tremendous load, the draught line on the side of the bulging hull of the ship was nearly out of sight under the water. The dark blue waters, contaminated with sewage and oil discharged by the ships, dashed against the sides of the ship, but the sea-going monster of some 5,000 or 6,000 tons did not budge. At the bow the Japanese flag fluttered as before. There were no more cattle on the wharf.

Then a hubbub reached his ears. Kang Jin Sok looked back and was startled. He saw a procession of more than a hundred girls. The procession came nearer. Like mourners in a funeral procession, they walked listlessly with drooping heads. Their hair was gathered in plaits hanging down their backs. They were in cotton clothes, the fringes of their skirts mud-spattered. There were police escorts at the front and rear of the column,

their sabers rattling. The procession halted by a gangplank. The girls looked up at the towering bow of the ship. They had pale, yellowish faces, and wide terror-stricken eyes.

Kang Jin Sok took a few steps forward. The Japanese at the head of the column yelled out and gave a girl a shove onto the gangway. She staggered, set one foot on it, then recoiled and turned round. The Jap closed in upon her, swearing. The bewildered girl stood gazing at the distant sky. Her big eyes shone with tears, quivering with anger and despair. The girl knelt down limply, put her hands on the ground and lowered her head till the forehead touched them. Perhaps, she was bidding a last farewell to her parents and her home. Her thin shoulders heaved under her worn clothes. The other girls who had been watching the scene turned away and brought the ends of their jacket strings to their eyes. Driven by the howling Jap the poor girl staggered up the gangplank.

"Where on earth are they being taken?" Kang Jin Sok asked a man standing by his side.

They're being sold away to Japan, poor girls," answered the man, probably a stevedore, who had been watching the scene with bitter sympathy.

"Sold away?" asked back Kang Jin Sok in amazement.

"Being shipped to Japan."

"To Japan?"

"Yeah. These days quite a few girls are sold away like that."

"What for?"

"What for? Lots of peasants in this Kyongsang Province have been driven off their land by the Japs and are starving to death. Then the Japs buy their daughters on the cheap and work them like slaves. It's appalling."

"Kang Jin Sok felt sick in his stomach.

"So you savages are now carrying away our people, even the young girls!" he shouted inwardly. His heart contracted and he could barely breathe.

"No, girls, don't go! You mustn't go!" Shouting voicelessly Kang Jin Sok hurried forward after the girls. But he saw policemen and customs officers standing under the gangway glaring. Now the last batch of girls were climbing the gangplank. Soon the same metallic rattle sounded as before and it went slowly up with a sharp, grating sound, which seemed to scrape at Kang Jin Sok's heart.

The girls stood holding on to the rails of the gunwale. Their desperate, tearful eyes were riveted wistfully on the homeland they were leaving, probably for ever. Thick columns of black smoke were rising from the funnels. The whistle sounded deep and hollow, and the huge steamer gave a jerk and moved slowly away from the quay. The whistle blew again, this time still more hollow and forlorn.

Just at that moment a girl cried out from the ship, "Ma-ma!"

The cry was so heart-rending. She was joined by other girls. "Ma-ma" wailed a chorus of dozens of girls. Their pitiable, dreadful wails found no echo. Some distance from the quay now, the ship leisurely turned its nose, giving one more whistle. "Ma-ma!" Helplessly they let go their hold on the rails and, one after another fell down on the deck.

Striking the deck with their little clenched fists, they howled, "Ma-ma, ma-ma!" The ship moved off, carrying away their wails. Belching black smoke, the steamer receded farther and farther away, drowning the girls' wails and the cattle's mooing. Sea gulls whirled over the ship, with plaintive cries, their white wings spread wide under the blue sky. Now the ship was far off near the horizon. The sea rocked calmly. Oil-stained waves swashed up against the concrete landing stage. The harbour, sea, sky and the far-off islets looked peaceful in the warm autumn sun of the south, as if they had seen nothing of the ghastly tragedy.

Kang Jin Sok stood motionless on the edge of the landing stage, watching the receding steamer. The doleful whistle of the steamboat and the crying of the girls were still ringing in his ears.

"Daughters, poor daughters! Forgive your homeland's impotence and helplessness, forgive it that it has let you down. Forgive us. But wherever you go, you must cling to life through thick and thin, never give up hope, never forget your homeland. One day we will win you back home."

Kang Jin Sok's clenched fists were trembling as he cried out these words deep in his heart.

Presently Kang Jin Sok walked slowly down the quay towards the piers where smaller boats were moored.

CHAPTER IV

THE BLOODY RIVER

1

After clearing the supper table, Chu Pung's wife went out with their son, perhaps to visit a neighbour while he sat alone in the room puffing at his pipe, looking out vacantly at the approaching dusk. A pile of husks smouldered in the yard, sending a wisp of bluish smoke upward and the pungent smell drifted into the room. In the outer yard there was a rick of sorghum, and the earthen bank under the eaves was piled high with sacks of grain.

Sitting and looking at these things Chu Pung heaved a deep sigh.

Each time the winds of late autumn blew, the smouldering heap glowed. The burning edges of the pile of sorghum husks sent up thick smoke.

Chu Pung was overtaken by melancholy. Another year had passed. He had carried compost out to the fields on an ox-drawn sleigh, ploughed up the stony patches of land, sowed, hoed and harvested. He had been farming for three years, was quite familiar with the work now, and was gathering in as good a harvest as an experienced farmer. There were stacks of oats and maize in his yard, sheaves of sorghum, broomcorn, millet, beans, red beans and green peas.

These things may gratify my wife, but will I ever find them satisfying? Chu Pung wondered.

The grain was not intended for military use nor to help the people. It had been grown and reaped to keep him, his wife and children. These crops for which his wife and he had sweated all the year, would enable them to live on till this time next year.

"But what's the use of living on like this?" Somebody

seemed to be asking him this merciless question.

What am I living for, anyway? Haven't, I, Chu Pung, been as good as dead in the six years since I buried the sword with which I had raised a volunteer army hoping to save the country? Why didn't I kill myself that day in the mountains? Did I sheathe my sword because life was so dear to me, or because I simply couldn't die leaving dark clouds of misfortune over my homeland? Or did I have a lingering hope that things might become better? Oh how I wish I had died!

Buried in thought, Chu Pung groaned. Then he jumped to his feet, went out across the yard and took the field lane to the Bloody River.

The river's turbulent voice came to him on the cool wind. He wished Hong Jun Gol would come to see him now. For Hong had said he would be here after the harvest, so he might come one of these days. Suddenly, Chu Pung felt very envious of Hong Jun Gol. For when he visited him, Hong Jun Gol had said that he was going to open an evening school for young villagers and, once in a while, give them a military training on the mountain behind Chang-gol village, and had asked him for help. Hong Jun Gol was like an innocent child. Chu Pung envied him for his conviction and his ardour. He must have been very active since they met last spring.

Hong Jun Gol had remembered him and had often dropped in on him in the spring, summer, and autumn. At first Hong Jun Gol had been rather rude to him, and he, not thinking much of him, had treated him coldly. So Hong Jun Gol might well not have come to see him again. Yet he had come, and often had told him about world events and about the cause of national independence, and would ask him eagerly if they might work together. Last summer he had seen that the fields were unweeded because of the shortage of hands, and he had stayed about a week and helped him with the weeding. In that time Chu Pung had learned many things from him.

Chu Pung had often been surprised at his exorbitant claims. Yet in that week he had listened with fresh interest, for Hong Jun Gol's estimation of the internal and external situation was logical and his arguments seemed sound and reasonable.

What has brought about such a change in Hong Jun Gol? he wondered. True, he had always been an excellent marksman, a good young man, brave and passionate. But commoner by birth, he had been an ordinary ignorant soldier. When he

had dropped in for a brief stay a few years ago, he was no better than Chu Pung himself, a purposeless vagabond without hope, with nothing but the six-shooter tucked away in his breast. He was a different man now, always carrying a book, reading whenever he found time. Chu Pung had seen and experienced a lot, but never had he seen a man change as radically as Hong Jun Gol.

Chu Pung was really amazed at the change. Gradually he became sympathetic with Hong's concept of an independence movement; he was especially grateful to the young man for his kindness. Sometimes Chu Pung even felt an urge to join Hong Jun Gol and start working again, however small the chances of success. But somehow he hesitated, for the lesson he had learnt had been very bitter.

His deep-seated belief was that unless the independence movement had a leader able to carry the nation's destiny on his shoulders, to control developments nationally, national liberation was a lost cause. In the years he had spent secluded in this village, he had used his wit to ascertain the reason for the complete failure of their struggle. He had drawn a number of conclusions, but he thought the basic reason was the lack of leadership.

Korea, which had slumbered for a long time in a corner of Asia, only awoke when foreign marauders attacked it with warships and big guns, and after their intrusion, the bloody nationwide struggle of resistance was waged for many years around the Kabo Peasant War, but they had been unable to save their nation and the struggle ended in a miserable failure. All because of the lack of sound leadership, Chu Pung thought. If there had been a leader capable of running the nation properly, of directing the struggle along the right path, this country proud of its patriotic traditions, would not have landed in this awful mess. Just look back over the years when I myself joined the Righteous Volunteers Army. Nearly all the thirteen Korean provinces witnessed an uprising of volunteers, the whole country was bursting forth like a volcano. Yet, the volunteers had no leader to unite and to direct them. They fought desperately but in scattered groups, only to meet tragic ends. Sometimes this thought even came into his dreams, and he felt his heart torn with indignation, saw blood before his eyes. These bitter memories were what had prevented Chu Pung from joining Hong Jun Gol.

Commander Chu Pung stood on the bank of the fast, powerful Bloody River. In the deepening dusk only the whitish, foamy surface of the turbulent river could be dimly seen.

Now, as the days went by, Chu Pung felt more and more keenly how miserable it was to waste one's life in this remote mountain village farming only to feed one's wife and children. This was what Hong Jun Gol had said on his first visit here last spring; and it kept gnawing at his mind. Wouldn't it be better to join Hong Jun Gol, to try again, to stake my life, whether they succeed or not, rather than to go on living like this? Since Hong Jun Gol came here the last time to ask him to help in giving the youngsters military training, the temptation had increased. He did not know how many boys there were, but he thought it would be far more worthwhile to command them in an assault on Songchon police station, say, even to get killed, than to go on with this meaningless life.

"It is the only way. No other way will soothe this mental agony." He muttered to himself, raising his head and looking at the darkening sky. Suddenly he felt a strong desire to see Hong Jun Gol. He looked at the distant murky sky over Chang-gol village, then turned around and walked back towards home.

He saw a light at the foot of the hill in the window of his house. His wife must have come back from her visit. Chu Pung decided that he would dress and start out for Chang-gol village to meet Hong Jun Gol. Feeling lighthearted now that his mind was made up, he quickened his pace. He opened the twig gate—and stopped short. He heard singing voices from the yard. His son and a man were singing, seated side by side on the straw mat spread out in front of the red burning heap of husks.

Iron bodies and tough fists....

The man and the child were singing together. It was a modern song familiar to Chu Pung. He strode hurriedly into the yard, calling out: "Hello, Mr. Hong!" His voice was unusually buoyant. Hong Jun Gol sprang to his feet.

"How are you? I came to give you a hand in harvesting, but you've already got it in."

"Thank you, but why should I trouble you so often with my small patch of land?"

"Don't mention it. By the way, your boy is very bright, he's learned everything I taught him last time off by heart."

"What use is it for a boy to be bright in these distant mountains.... But, look, you've come at the right moment. I was even now going to go to Chang-gol to see you."

"To Chang-gol?"

Hong Jun Gol had been surprised at his unusual vivacity and even more so when he said he had been coming to see him.

"We'll have a talk by and by. Come and sit down. I think it's cooler here than in the room. Wife, will you make supper for our guest, he must be hungry," Chu Pung called into the room, waving to Hong to sit down on the straw mat.

"No thank you, sir. I had my supper at a tavern on the way."

"Oh, but you shouldn't have done that. We'll have a drink, then."

The two men sat facing each other on the mat.

Chu Pung now realized that he was agitated, quite unlike his usual self, and he calmed down and recovered his self-possession.

"Well, are your brother's folks in Chang-gol well?"

"Yes, sir," said Hong Jun Gol, still perplexed.

"I'm afraid I've not been awfully polite to you. You've come to see me, a mere nobody, so often for old time's sake, and living in a nearby village, I've never called on you, I really have no excuse. A man deteriorates and becomes thoughtless when he abandons his colours."

Chu Pung laughed in spite of himself. He was saying what he really thought, yet everything he said this evening sounded strange. Hong Jun Gol, by no means certain what it all amounted to or how he should react, mumbled "Don't mention it."

Chu Pung offered his guest tobacco, and then asked seriously, "Well, are you doing it well, the thing you mentioned to me the other day? I mean recruiting young people for military training."

"Well, the truth to tell, part of the reason that I came was to ask you your advice about it."

"Are you starting right away?"

"In a fortnight."

"How many have you got?" Chu Pung was inquisitive.

"Twenty or so if all goes well."

"Twenty or so! Ho!"

Hong Jun Gol was not sure whether Chu Pung's words were admiring or disappointed. Chu Pung was silent for a while, stealing an occasional glance at Hong Jun Gol's face, before he suddenly drew closer to him, with a determined look. Hong Jun Gol recognized the resolute expression on Chu Pung's face he had worn before a battle in the Righteous Volunteers when he had given the command.

"Look, Mr. Hong," Chu Pung said. "I've been hesitant to accept your advice, not because I'm insensitive to your kindness or because I distrust you. It is my mind that has been troubled, though perhaps it is not necessary to explain it all to you now. I am going to accept your advice."

"You are?!" Hong Jun Gol was astonished at this unexpected turn.

"You say there are some twenty men, and that, I think, should be enough to have a go whether we succeed or fail."

"What?!"

"When we disbanded our RVA unit, we buried about twenty rifles in Yangdok, I remember. We can dig them up and equip the young men. A month's drill and they will be ready to fight. Let's take them to the mountains in Yangdok or in Maengsan, and fight it out from there until they get us. I can't go on living this meaningless life. Wouldn't it be a thousand times more manly to die in battle, even if to kill only one single Jap? This is what I am thinking." Chu Pung's face was grim with determination.

Only then did Hong Jun Gol follow the drift of his thoughts. And though Chu Pung's speech showed that he was very wide of the mark, it was precious to Hong Jun Gol. For until recently Hong Jun Gol had had similar ideas. And even after he had come under Kim Hyong Jik's leadership, he had not really understood his new, great plan for the independence movement until he had received repeated and thorough explanations from the leader.

Remembering this, Hong Jun Gol spoke calmly.

"Thank you, Commander, for your kind offer of help. But the military training to be given during the coming short training course is not so that twenty or so young men might fight just one battle, do or die."

"Then what is your intention?" Chu Pung inquired, looking direct at him.

"As I explained before, we are building up our strength under a far-reaching plan." And Hong Jun Gol went on to tell him about Kim Hyong Jik's policy once more and about the great importance of the work of developing sturdy youths equipped with a high degree of patriotism and intelligence as well as military science in implementing this policy. Chu Pung puffed away at his pipe in silence showing no reaction. When Hong Jun Gol paused, he raised his head.

"Your argument is logical," he said. "Your scheme is great and right. Now I think I have taken your point because you have explained it several times. It seems quite likely that the golden opportunity you speak of might really come and that if we were to rise then well prepared and in sufficient strength, we could win independence. But tell me, for that is most important, who will prepare such strength together, strength that is great enough to crush those hellish Japs."

"Who will prepare? We are preparing it now. Don't you see that?"

"People like you and me? The twenty or so young men who you say have joined you? Ha, ha, ha. Mr. Hong, I'm sorry, please don't be offended. But, honestly speaking, that is what has bothered me and kept me from accepting your proposal. Not that I do not think well of you, but, even if we have truly great plan, how would you and I be able to fulfill it? Look, when we were in the RVA before, every county in all the thirteen provinces of Korea swarmed with volunteers and yet we couldn't save our country." Chu Pung said this with bitterness and infinite sadness.

"At that time we lacked a leader of sufficient stature," answered Hong Jun Gol calmly.

"A leader of sufficient stature?" Chu Pung asked, raising his voice; his eyes flashed as he regarded Hong Jun Gol. "You're right. That is just what I was going to say. Do you mean then that we have one now?"

"We have, sir." Hong Jun Gol was confident.

"You say we have a leader? Tell me then, where is he?" Chu Pung was obviously very doubtful.

Hong Jun Gol did not answer, he just looked at him. All summer Hong had been visiting Chu Pung, had been trying to win him over. Chu Pung had admitted that what Hong had said was right but he had hesitated to hold out his hand and this had vexed Hong. Now Hong had found out what it

was that had been worrying Chu. Mr. Kim Hyong Jik was absolutely right when he had said that it was harder to open a man's heart than to breach an enemy castle, Hong thought. Why didn't I try to find out what it was that was weighing on this man's mind, why didn't I tell him about Mr. Kim Hyong Jik? Yet though I regret it now, it could well have been dangerous then to tell him about Mr. Kim Hyong Jik. But now I think that I can safely do so.

Hong Jun Gol turned the matter over, and then made up his mind to tell. For even if Chu Pung decided not to cooperate, he was sure he would not divulge the secret.

"Commander, you know me, know that I am ignorant. So how could I work out a great plan such as this and dare to explain it to you?"

"Well, I understand. I did once suspect that there might be some great man behind you."

"Yes, I think I owe all I am now to Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, the leader of the independence movement, whom I met last autumn and under whose leadership I have been working ever since."

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik? Who is he? Tell me about him."

Hong Jun Gol collected his thoughts and then told how last autumn Kim Hyong Jik had saved his life; how the leader had educated him while at his home recovering from his wounds; and how his great ideas had now won widespread sympathy and support across the country and abroad, with the result that the cornerstones of an independence movement's national organization were being steadily laid. Chu Pung cried out like a blind man who, suddenly recovering his sight, was dazed by the splendid view.

Hong Jun Gol frankly confided that when he had first met Chu Pung last spring he had given him up as hopeless, and that Kim Hyong Jik had admonished him severely for this.

"...I'm really ashamed of myself now, but at the time I said to Mr. Kim, 'What use is Commander Chu Pung to us? What will our independence movement lose if we leave him out? It would be wiser to work with high-spirited youths than to waste time on going to see such a man again and again.' Mr. Kim was very displeased at this, and he reasoned with me like this: 'A man who does not value his comrades will not be able to fight the enemy relentlessly or to develop true comradeship. You wave aside a comrade, but don't you realize

that the only way to rally tens of thousands of comrades is to approach them one by one? And if you slight one person, won't you eventually neglect all your comrades? It would be inhuman to leave a comrade out in the cold without offering him a guiding hand, a brave comrade who once risked his life fighting for national independence even though he has since gone astray. That is failing your comrade, going back on your obligations as an independence fighter'."

As the memory came back to him, Hong Jun Gol blushed.

When Hong Jun Gol's story was finished, Chu Pung sat looking at him, with a blank entranced expression on his face, like a man losing his mind. Could there really be such a great man? Chu Pung tried to imagine the imposing figure of a great man with such lofty ideas, such warmth of heart; it was beyond his imagination although in his forty years he had tasted all the sweets and bitters of life.

"So, Mr. Kim Hyong Jik really told you to bring in a man like me by meeting me a dozen, even a score of times?"

"You find it difficult to believe, Commander? Well, sometimes I, too, wonder if I'm dreaming, I wonder how I met a great leader such as Mr. Kim Hyong Jik. But it is a fact. And only the other day Mr. Kim said that if I were to ask your help with military training, you surely would agree."

Chu Pung fell silent again for a few moments, before, looking up at the distant sky, he faltered, "It is all like a dream. That there should be a man who remembers and treasures men like me."

The dark-blue sky was studded with stars. Chu Pung's face lit up. Now he blinked. With swelling heart, Hong Jun Gol, too, looked up at the twinkling stars.

"Mr. Hong, do you think that someone like me could actually meet Mr. Kim Hyong Jik?" asked Chu Pung timidly.

"Why not, sir. He would be very happy to meet you."

"But, Mr. Hong, I have no face to see him now," said Chu Pung rather excited, and grasped the hands of Hong Jun Gol. "Give me a task. I will train youngsters or I can rally new comrades. Please take me to Mr. Kim when I have done some worthwhile work." Chu Pung was earnest and eager.

"Commander!" Hong Jun Gol took Chu Pung's hands firmly, his simple face beaming with joy.

Chu Pung's eyes shone with tears.

2

When we cross the mountains
Rifles and kitbags over our shoulders....

Hong Jun Gol was singing as with a huge cotton bundle slung across his shoulder he reached the Chang-gol ravine. The sun was low over Black Dragon Mountain. The hillsides seemed covered with crimson foliage in the evening glow, making the autumn scenery still more glorious. A wisp of kitchen smoke rose from every chimney in the village.

Soldiers, soldiers....

Hong Jun Gol's voice, sonorous though a trifle husky, was gay and cheerful. He felt carefree and happy, which was rather rare for him. Coming back from Chu Pung's, Hong Jun Gol was jaunty beyond measure. He could not have said exactly why, but he vividly saw the new path of the independence movement, lighted for him by Kim Hyong Jik, and imagined himself as having just stepped proudly out on that path. To him the idea of national unity through each man winning over ten, every ten—a hundred, every hundred—a thousand, and each thousand—ten thousand, was no longer the vague ideal as it had been. It was a tangible, realistic goal which he was working towards step by step.

Everything will go off well, he thought, if only I tackle it the way Mr. Kim asks me to. I feel a strong desire to do something more, to go ahead, to rush ahead. I must get back home quickly to make adequate preparations for the military training and start building up the evening school right away. Hong Jun Gol had been quickening his pace, but he came to an involuntary halt at the thought of the evening school. Because the evening school was a big headache for him. According to Kim Hyong Jik's instructions a friendship society had been formed some time ago with the young people of Chang-gol, for the purpose of building up the village.

But the society was not working properly. The young villagers took it for an association to run football games, river-fishing excursions on a harvest moon festival or collect money to help out families for marriages, funerals and other religious rites. He had wanted to open an evening school to teach people how to read and write, imbue them with anti-Japanese patriotism and, particularly, to introduce them to Mr. Kim's profound ideas. So he had roused the young people to build a house for the evening school. But the school was not running well. For a start they had no teacher. For a couple of days, Hong Jun Gol himself had stood at the blackboard in an effort to teach but he soon realized that the job was beyond him. He thought that he would have to go and ask Mr. Kim to find him a teacher, but hesitated to make such a request when Mr. Kim was so busy guiding the whole difficult struggle; Hong had been unable to send him even one comrade, and he surely could not be so cheeky as to bother him for a competent person. Then one day, a youth from Sondol village had come and told him that there was a woman who could do the job in Yangji village on the far side of the mountain. She had taught at a short-course school in the township of Songchon, but had quit the school for some reason and been staying with her mother's sister in Yangji village for about a month. Hong was a trifle worried because she was a woman. Moreover, she was an old maid of 22 (In those days an unmarried girl of 22 was regarded as an old maid). This woman, Pyon Ok Rim, had been through a primary school in Pyongyang. She had no parents; it was said that her father had been killed in action as a member of the RVA. So she had come to live with her aunt who was a farmer. They said she had decided to settle in the village and join her aunt in farming. Her being a woman, an unmarried one at that, was a handicap. Yet, if only she would agree, she might well be as good a teacher as they could hope for in this remote mountain village. They mustn't slight or shun her just because she is a woman, Hong Jun Gol thought. Mr. Kim Hyong Jik had always stressed that discriminating or disdaining women was a manifestation of the rotten feudal ideas, and that everybody, men and women, young and old, should be pulled into the revolutionary struggle.

He discussed the problem of Pyon Ok Rim with members of the friendship society. They all agreed to inviting her. And

though they said it might be rather embarrassing for grown men to be taught by a woman, they suggested that Hong Jun Gol approach her on the matter. He had been evasive at first but he had finally decided to take the bull by the horns. But when it came to going on to meet Pyon Ok Rim, his feet were riveted to the ground.

The mere thought of going to see a strange woman made his face flush and his heart thump violently. If I meet her, I'll have to speak, he thought. But what shall I say and how? I'd be sweating hard, no doubt.

Finally, on the morning of the day he left to visit Commander Chu Pung, he had crossed the hill to Yangji village with a firm resolve. But once in the village, his resolve gave way and he felt all weak inside. The mere sight of the woman's house made him blush. And now a new anxiety took over. Would this modern girl, educated in Pyongyang, be willing to teach peasant youths in a remote mountain village evening school? How shamed he would be if the girl should treat him coldly or refuse out of hand, even before he could express himself properly? This thought left him still more discouraged. He stood with a preoccupied look for a while, then turned on his heels. He went to a member of the friendship society in Yangji village, a youngster of 16.

"I called on Miss Pyon," began Hong Jun Gol, "but... she was not at home. I've got urgent business on hand and can't wait for her. So could you go see her later, and tell her about my visit, and sound her out on our idea of her teaching at the evening school, and let me know the result." He thought he would go back to see the girl after finding out her reaction. The youth looked at Hong Jun Gol, puzzled, because this stout-hearted, dauntless man had gone red and was stammering. Then, he said, "No, I won't. Wait at my home for a little while and go and see her yourself."

"Why not? I've got an urgent business to attend to. Really...."

Hong Jun Gol had finally managed to talk the lad into it, and gone on to the village of Pyongpung-gol.

As he remembered it all at the roadside Hong Jun Gol's lips broke into a wry smile at his own faint-heartedness.

"Tomorrow I'll go to see the girl, come what may," he decided. "Fool that I am, to be such a coward. Women are human

too. Stop hesitating and push forward, then you'll get things done."

Hong Jun Gol hitched up the bundle on his shoulder and went on. The bundle was full of paper, pencils, chalk and the like, which he had bought in the township of Kangdong on his way back. His heart was light and cheerful.

Soldiers, we're going over to Yohwadang....

Again humming the tune which could have been old or new, Hong Jun Gol approached the entrance to the village when he suddenly stopped singing, slowed his pace and gazed ahead. A man and a woman were coming from the opposite direction. The man was slightly-built, wearing a coarse flax jacket, such as the villagers usually wore. But the woman who was walking ahead wore modern dress, a rare thing in the countryside.

"Who could she be?" wondered Hong Jun Gol, walking slowly with inquiring eyes on the approaching figures.

"Oh, here you come, Brother!" the man who had been following on the heels of the woman called out and ran forward to meet him. Hong Jun Gol halted saying, "Ul Sok, is that you?"

This was the young man from Yangji village whom Hong Jun Gol had yesterday asked to approach Pyon Ok Rim on his behalf. The lad came up, panting.

"Have you been to the township?" asked Ul Sok, taking the bundle off Hong Jun Gol's shoulder.

"Yes," replied Hong Jun Gol curtly, with a sidelong glance at the approaching woman. The woman stopped on the wayside. With the bundle slung on his back, Ul Sok looked towards the woman, and then asked Hong in a whisper, "Do you know who she is?"

"Who?" asked back Hong Jun Gol with a question in his eyes.

Ul Sok grinned and said teasingly, "Try and guess."

"How can I?"

"Tut, you went to see her yesterday, didn't you?"

"Dear me! So this is her?" gasped Hong Jun Gol, his heart giving thumps against the ribs.

"I did just what you told me to."

"Well and what did she say?"

"She said she had been home all day yesterday and wondered how you could have managed to miss her. Anyway, she was very sorry for you," Ul Sok chuckled.

Still more embarrassed Hong Jun Gol said.

"Stop that nonsense! What else did you say?"

"I told her about the evening classes. She said she'd think it over, and this noon she came and asked me to show her the way; she wanted to see the head of the friendship society and to have a look at the school building. And here we are in Chang-gol."

"Oh, is that so?" Hong Jun Gol became round-eyed.

"Yes, of course. But you weren't home, so we were going back, but we decided to take a look at the school. We've just come from there."

"Oh, you have?" Hong Jun Gol said, now feeling completely at a loss.

"I'd better introduce you to each other, hadn't I?" said Ul Sok, and ran towards the girl and said something to her.

Then, the girl came towards Hong Jun Gol, her head modestly lowered. She stopped a few steps away. She was dressed in a black cotton-serge skirt and a white calico jacket. She was slender and wore bobbed hair which hung neatly about her neck, giving her a simple yet graceful appearance. A cluster of wild camomiles were swaying in the cool breeze around her canvas-shoe feet.

Hong Jun Gol thought he should say something, but he blushed and could not get a word out.

Pyon Ok Rim raised her head and broke the silence.

"I was told that you called at my place yesterday, but... but I am awfully sorry we didn't meet." She said apologetically in a clear and gentle voice. Her oval face with its shapely nose was rosy and her eyes were bright and serene. Her face was beautiful in the evening glow. Hong Jun Gol was confused, and after a few moments of hesitation, blurted out, "Oh, no. Never mind. But the fact is... I took the liberty of ...."

Hong Jun Gol did not know what he was saying. Ul Sok stared disappointedly at him. After a few moments, Hong Jun Gol realized he was bungling it, and pulled himself together.

"I thought I'd go and see you tomorrow morning. But you took the trouble of coming to see me first. I'm really sorry."

"Don't mention it, sir. If what little I have learned can be of any help to you villagers, I will always be ready to...."

Pyon Ok Rim seemed too embarrassed to speak on and she lowered her charming eyes to look at the rustling camomiles at her feet.

"So you mean you are willing to take charge of our evening school?" Hong Jun Gol was rather shaken at the girl's immediate willingness.

"How could I dare to take charge of it?... I just want to help you, Mr. Hong," replied the girl with a faint flush of colour in her face.

"Thank you. Thank you so much," said Hong Jun Gol; he was unable to find other words.

Bending her head gently, the girl said, "It is getting late... so I will come back to see you tomorrow morning."

"Good-bye," he said hastily.

Pyon Ok Rim and Ul Sok were already walking along the lane to Yangji village. The lane was lined with lush camomiles. As Ok Rim walked quickly away, her hair and her skirt blowing in the wind, Hong Jun Gol watched them abstractedly. He seemed to see Ok Rim's oval face and clear eyes. She was such a vivacious girl, but he had been comically overanxious and hesitant. A modern woman who got a modern town education must really have something about her, he thought. He was a bit ashamed that he had told a lie, but in any case, things had come out well. Hong Jun Gol sighed with relief.

He strode on along the mountain path in the autumn wind, with the bundle he had taken from Ul Sok slung on his back.

After a quick supper, Hong Jun Gol went to the schoolhouse. He looked into it. The schoolroom looked too shabby for the new lady teacher. It was a schoolroom in name only. Apart from a few mats spread over the earthen floor, the room was bare and bleak. He felt ashamed that Pyon Ok Rim had been here to find this.

Something must be done, though belatedly, to put it into a proper shape, he decided. He went back to the village and summoned members of the friendship society. At least the teacher must have a desk, there should be short-legged oblong desks for the pupils, and the surroundings must be cleaned up. He told the youths about the woman teacher and gave them assignments to make desks and tidy the schoolhouse early in the morning.

The next morning they were about to get down to work, when Pyon Ok Rim came over with Ul Sok who carried a heavy

load. She herself wore working clothes and carried an earthen vessel on her head. Ul Sok brought some back numbers of newspapers and magazines for papering, and Pyon Ok Rim, some flour paste.

Hong Jun Gol felt very sorry for the young lady, yet he was delighted that she had come.

The lads exchanged greetings with her. They were working in a few groups, and they were in a wonderful mood all day. By dusk the work was done. The evening glow was reflected beautifully on the freshly papered white windows. A number of short-legged oblong desks like those in noodle houses were arranged in rows in the cleanly papered room.

The youths dispersed, and only Hong Jun Gol and Pyon Ok Rim remained in the deserted schoolroom, sitting opposite each other. Having worked with Ok Rim all day, discussing things with her, Hong Jun Gol now felt more at ease with her presence. They talked over the plan for running the evening school. But Hong Jun Gol had no particular suggestions to make. He had had no schooling at all, and had only visited the Myongsin School where Kim Hyong Jik was teaching a couple of times, but that had given him little idea on running an evening school. But Pyon Ok Rim suggested a detailed plan she had thought out—the subjects to be taught, the hours, enrolling of more youths, and more women and children in the village, than those already on the list.

Hong Jun Gol was struck with admiration, and only stole glances now and then at Ok Rim's flushed face. She was a gentle yet passionate, strong-willed woman. It seemed to him that now that this girl had come to teach at the evening school, everything would go well if the school was entrusted to her entirely. So he simply agreed to every suggestion she made.

"Then, I'll begin tomorrow evening," she said glancing at him with her clear eyes. "And as for enrolling the women, Mr. Hong, you might find that rather difficult to handle. So if you don't mind, I think I'd better look into that myself tomorrow. You don't have any objection, do you?"

"Of course not. Please do."

"All right. Then, I must be going...."

She got to her feet and Hong Jun Gol followed her. As she opened the door and stepped out of the room, Ok Rim stopped short, exclaiming with disappointment, "Oh, it's already dark!"

The sun had gone behind the hill and the dusk was gathering in the ravine. It was more than five *ri* to Yangji village across the hill, and it would get pitch dark well before she got to the ridge.

"I'll...," began Hong Jun Gol, but did not manage to add the words: "see you home."

"Never mind, I can go by myself. Good-bye," the girl said and stepped down from the earthen bank, her small mouth pursed up, and walked off hurriedly.

"No, you can't. You can't go alone." Only then, Hong Jun Gol made up his mind and followed her quickly. They walked along the sloping mountain lane in the dark, Hong Jun Gol ahead of Pyon Ok Rim. He walked as slowly as possible but Ok Rim kept falling behind, so Hong Jun Gol had to stand and wait; and then she would catch him up panting.

Once they reached the ridge, the path became easier. They walked on in silence for some time. Then Hong Jun Gol stopped and said to Pyon Ok Rim who was coming up. "Miss Pyon, I have a request."

"A request?" said the girl, stopping to face him.

"Please don't address me as 'Mister' any more."

"Why? How should I address you then?"

"It's not the right way to address your pupil, I'm going to attend the evening school from tomorrow."

"Are you, really, Mr. Hong?" asked she in surprise.

"I'd like to take advantage of this opportunity to get some school education. And the word 'Mister' doesn't suit a peasant like me."

"Oh, but what should I call you then?" asked the girl, perplexed.

"Oh, just call me by my name—Hong Jun Gol—or Pupil Hong Jun Gol will do."

"Oh, my! How can I do that?"

The two began to walk again. There was another silence. Now the winking lights of Yangji village could be seen through the thick oak wood.

"Erh, may I ask you a question?" said Ok Rim irresolutely, walking close behind him. Hong stopped and turned back.

After hesitating a bit, the girl went on, "I heard you used to be a Righteous Volunteer. Were you?"

Her question took him aback. Hong Jun Gol looked surprised and did not know how to answer, for no one in the

village but his own family knew. The villagers thought that he had been away to earn money. And if one or two did have an inkling, they pretended not to know. So, her abrupt question from which it was apparent that she knew about his past startled him.

"Mr. Hong, I wonder if you knew Pyon Sa Jip?" ignoring his surprise the girl shot another question at him. All her questions shook him.

"Pyon Sa Jip?!"

"He was my father."

"Your father?!" exclaimed Hong Jun Gol, wincing for the name was so familiar, and the image still so vivid in his mind. Pyon Sa Jip, an old man, upright as bamboo, a man of fortitude and resolution. Pyon bore the title *chinsa* (one who had passed the first examination for the feudal government service—*Tr.*) and was one of the commanders of the RVA unit to which Hong Jun Gol had belonged. He had been with his unit to the last, when some of the officers had died in battle and others had deserted in despair.

When things had become entirely hopeless and the unit had been reduced to some dozen men, including Hong Jun Gol, *chinsa* Pyon, their only officer, had directed the men in battle across the rugged mountains of Yangdok. And in a desperate fight in a mountain gorge he had been hit by a bullet. Clutching his bleeding chest, he had looked at his weeping men. Hong Jun Gol vividly remembered the old man's stern eyes.

"Why waste time on tears, men? Go back and fight the Japs!" And with these words, *chinsa* Pyon had breathed his last. He had been buried under a great old pine tree on a sunny side of a mountain in Yangdok.

And was Pyon Ok Rim truly his daughter? Indeed, they had said that *chinsa* Pyon came from Pyongyang and had been a patriotic enlightenment campaigner. He had joined the RVA, after the shackling "Chongmi Seven-Point Treaty" was signed. But meeting Pyon Ok Rim, his daughter, was so unexpected. However, before he could answer, Pyon Ok Rim went on:

"Father came home for a few days in the winter of the year he died. I badgered him to tell me about the Righteous Volunteers. He told me about a brave man named Hong, who, single-handed, had raided a Japanese police station and thrown in a bomb. My father said that he was an ardent young patriot from Chang-gol, Songchon, who had joined the Righteous Volun-

teers at the age of 16. Staying with my aunt in Yangji village, I remembered the story and made some inquiries and found out that you, Mr. Hong are living in Chang-gol. I wanted to come and see you. But I wavered because I feared that I might be mistaken. But now that I have met you.... I am somehow sure that it is you...."

Though it was dark, Hong Jun Gol seemed to see Pyon Ok Rim's face looking up at him so wistfully. He took a step closer to her, he could not help himself.

"Yes. I fought under your father. He fought heroically to the last."

"Did he? Then you must know where and how my father met his end." The girl could say no more, she was choked with emotion.

Hong Jun Gol, too, felt a lump in his throat. For he could vividly remember the gorge where they had fought that last battle, and the hill where they had buried Pyon Sa Jip's body in the rain. How nice it would be if he had survived, if they could have fought together under Kim Hyong Jik. His heart was torn at this thought.

"Your father remained true to his cause and fought the Japanese marauders to the last. One rainy day in late autumn...," Hong Jun Gol began calmly with a sigh. Walking on leisurely, he told her how her father had died a hero's death.

The girl listened but did not cry. She was silent. From time to time Hong Jun Gol looked over his shoulder at her face, but could not make out her expression in the dark. He could only see that she was walking with her head erect and her eyes fixed at the distant lights of Yangji village. He recalled her gentle, pretty, yet sad face.

Hong Jun Gol felt she was no ordinary girl. But he could not see that Pyon Ok Rim bit her lip until it almost bled.

3

Late autumn had touched the hills and fields of Naedong village. The vast stretches of the Popyon plain naked to the dark-red soil was dotted with shocks of harvested grain. Birds

flocked about in quest of food. The azure sky was clear and the Taedong-gang and the Sujong-chon were dyed the deepest blue. The woods of Mt. Ponghwa-san, which had been ablaze with autumn colours had begun shedding leaves in the chilly wind and frost. Only the fully ripe wild jujubes were dazzlingly red in the thickets halfway up the hill.

The thick pines on Mt. Ponghwa-san alone remained unchanged. The pine groves which had grown more luxuriant this year, swayed and rustled in the late autumn wind. A tall old pine stood alone like a giant on the mountain top. The huge tree looked hundreds of years old. Long spells of hardship had twisted and distorted its boughs, yet it grew well and thick, and shook its voluminous head in the wind.

There was a clearing under the old pine and a huge rock, behind which sat a number of people. His back against the trunk of the pine tree which was four arm spans thick Kim Hyong Jik sat with a circle of comrades disguised as peasants, peddlers, students, gentlemen, workers and so on. Among them were Hong Jun Gol, Maeng Gyong Jae, Cho Pil U, Pang In Su, Chon Yong Tae from Won Dong Yu's armed force, Pak Yun Hwan from Unryul, Yun Sam from Kyongsang Province, and Commander Chu Pung. Kang Jin Sok was absent, because there had been a similar incident in Cholla Province to what had happened in Kyongsang Province, and he had to sort out the situation, which meant he could not go away from there. So he had sent Yun Sam of Kyongsang Province to the meeting to report on what was happening in both provinces to Kim Hyong Jik and to get his instructions.

Commander Chu Pung stood out among the group.

He had become a supporter of Kim Hyong Jik's cause through Hong Jun Gol, and Kim Hyong Jik had summoned him when he heard that the Commander had taken on the military training of young people on the mountain behind Chang-gol. Chu Pung had arrived the day before and stayed with Kim Hyong Jik until the meeting was opened for instruction. Now he was asked to be present at the meeting. Having heard about the amazing activities going on at home and even outside the country under the guidance of Kim Hyong Jik, he was seized with wonder and admiration. His face flushed with excitement, he kept watching Kim Hyong Jik.

There was a report from Kim Sok Ha, now in Peking, that he had settled down and got started.

Kim Hyong Jik had just heard detailed reports from many comrades about their respective postings. As a result of his guidance in the previous summer, which had corrected their mistakes, their work in mustering men with similar views had been progressing smoothly in recent months. In their areas they had won over comrades in almost every sphere, and had efficiently worked to get the independence movement's new policy across. Now every speaker expressed a desire for the national organization Kim Hyong Jik had proposed in spring, and the many comrades working around the country and abroad agreed on this. So now they were waiting eagerly for Kim Hyong Jik to speak.

"...Judging from what you have said, and from the views of all those who have been to see me, and also from the suggestions made by the comrades in the areas I have visited, I can say most of our comrades have similar views. You want an organization now to step up our movement, don't you?" said Kim Hyong Jik. He took a circular glance at the comrades, and it was clear that he had understood their meaning.

"Yes, sir," answered Chon Yong Tae gently. All the others, too, looked at Kim Hyong Jik in agreement. He was silent for a while, looking at the comrades. Then he went on:

"You know that when you build a house you first have to lay solid foundations; and that a tree must strike deep roots to flourish."

With this abrupt remark he raised his head and looked up at the tall pine. The others followed his eyes, but they did not yet understand what was on his mind.

"Look at this pine," he said. "It must be several hundred years old. Mt. Ponghwa-san must have been thick with similar trees when this tree was young. Yet of all of them, this pine alone survives, though growing in the crevice of the rock it had by far the least favourable conditions. How is it that this pine has stood there on the rock for hundreds of years while others growing in more fertile soil, have perished?"

They all turned their searching eyes to the gently swaying pine.

The giant tree soaring high into the sky was stout and sturdy, as if armour clad.

"Look at those roots which have spread out in all directions," said Kim Hyong Jik, pointing to the base of the tree, and all eyes followed his. He went on:

"This tree on the rock has yearned for soil right from the start. It must have felt very keenly that soil was its source of life. Whether it struck root into the earth or not was decisive to its survival. So some of its roots forced their way through chinks of the rock in a life-and-death struggle to burrow into the earth. Others which did not manage to make their way through cracks in the rock spread over it in all directions until they reached the earth. Look at the scores of roots. How sinewy and strong they are! Perhaps the pine will be green like that for the next thousand years. I want our organization to develop like that pine. I want to have it rooted deep in this land like this pine which grows luxuriant in the teeth of every storm."

He paused, and gazed meaningfully at the pine. The others also looked, deeply moved. There was a silence as each tried in his own way to interpret Kim Hyong Jik's meaning that an organization must be built up as strong as that old pine.

"Mr. Kim," Pak Yun Hwan was first to break the silence.

Kim Hyong Jik turned to him, and Pak Yun Hwan hesitated a while before he asked, "Should we understand you as meaning that we must first enlighten the masses and rally them, and train more independence fighters from among them?"

"Yes," replied Kim Hyong Jik, looking approvingly at Pak Yun Hwan. "That is exactly what I mean."

A man of heavy build with a roundish face, Pak Yun Hwan was self-possessed and judicious. He had worked more efficiently than the other areas. He had studied at the same middle school as Kim Hyong Jik, and had a closer and deeper understanding of his purpose than anyone else.

Kim Hyong Jik continued:

"As you just said, we have succeeded in uniting many comrades. No doubt, this considerable success is due to a great deal of efforts from the comrades here and those working in different parts of the country. You might well think that a national independence organization is needed now. But I believe it would be premature. If our sole object were to form this organization, we could have done it before now. But we are people dedicated to a great cause that may well have to be carried on through several generations. So our organization will have to be strong and durable enough to negotiate a long hard road; therefore, it must have roots in the whole nation, among the masses. If we liken our independence movement to this pine, the masses are what the soil is to the tree. Now

what is the present situation? Can we claim that we are deeply rooted in the masses, firmly enough to brave all storm with heads held high?"

Kim Hyong Jik glanced questioningly round at each of the comrades. All of them were sitting with their eyes dropped.

"In our Hwanghae Province, I must admit, we have barely begun work," said Pak Yun Hwan in the same calm tones. The rest looked up at Kim Hyong Jik, suggesting that their situation was much the same.

"Things are the same everywhere," said Kim Hyong Jik and added:

"In view of the increasingly complicated situation, it is a matter of pressing urgency to form the organization. But there is no short cut. Only when we go to the masses with all our hearts and train more independence fighters, can we speed it up. If rocks stand in our way then we must shift them; if we hit stones then we must dig them out, so that our organization is rooted deep in fertile soil."

"Quite right, sir," said Chon Yong Tae who was watching Kim Hyong Jik with an expression of unbounded respect and admiration.

"Comrades, let us be patient," Kim Hyong Jik went on. "Let us brace ourselves and get down to our new task with all our energy. It's getting late, so let us now discuss the specific work that must be done when you are back in your posts."

The sun was sinking to the west of Mt. Ponghwa-san, and the wind was chillier in the thicket.

Kim Hyong Jik dwelt on how best to work among the masses, speaking from his own knowledge and experience.

He explained how he had united the masses through the school guild, the village community guild, the stone-monument guild, Myongsin School and the evening school he had set up in the village of Naedong. The others found this particularly instructive.

He said in concrete terms that every possible means suited to local conditions should be used to get through to the masses. He suggested bringing under our influence and using various guilds and friendship societies such as had been set up in Naedong and the traditional mutual aid organizations of the masses, as well as local private and evening schools, and forming similar organizations where there were none.

Lastly, he again emphasized the need to train many new champions for the independence movement from among the working people. For if our organization is to become that of the masses, he went on, many independence fighters should emerge from among the masses and guide them. Moreover, he added, we must not forget the experiences of the Righteous Volunteers. They had proved that the champions from working people fought well, unflinchingly, to the last.

Those present realized keenly that his great idea of *Chiwon* was being further developed and deepened with its far-reaching implications. Commander Chu Pung, among others, was agitated beyond measure. Chu Pung blinked his moist eyes, recalling old comrades-in-arms who had fallen in battle without even having the chance to meet Kim Hyong Jik.

Having explained the general orientation of their activities and tasks, Kim Hyong Jik gave each comrade his detailed assignment.

Pak Yun Hwan from Unryul was told to rouse his comrades to work among the peasants in Sinchon, Chaeryong and Namuri and Orori plains where the Oriental Development Company of Japan was solidly entrenched. Cho Pil U from Pyongyang was to win more students over to our side through their associations; and Pang In Su was assigned to send comrades to operate among the workers of the hosiery mills and the rubber factories in Pyongyang and among the peasants in the Sunchon, Anju and Kaechon areas. Kim Hyong Jik said that he would go to Pyongyang himself in a few days to help them with their work.

Like-minded persons were to be selected for training from among the peasants in Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces and among the workers and especially stevedores in Pusan, Mokpo and other big cities in that area. This task was assigned to Yun Sam.

Then, Kim Hyong Jik assigned Chon Yong Tae to the work among the comrades active in the border area and, especially, in Won Dong Yu's Independence Army unit. He said:

"...We attach great importance to and expect much from the independence movement and, particularly from military activity in the border area along the Amnok-gang and Tumangang Rivers. So we are very grateful to the many comrades working there and particularly to Commander Won Dong Yu for their energetic activities to support our policy. And it is

very gratifying that the commander is striving to propagate our policy to his neighbouring Independence Army units and to join up with them."

Chon Yong Tae listened to Kim Hyong Jik, his passionate youthful eyes filled with delight. Kim Hyong Jik went on:

"And Won Dong Yu's unit seems to me to have a problem that must be solved without delay. He'll have to build his unit up."

"You say the unit must be built up?" asked Chon Yong Tae dubiously. After the Pyongyang meeting the leadership of Won Dong Yu's unit discussed it for days and had finally worked out a plan to implement Kim Hyong Jik's policy. The unit which had been inert began to show life again when the new policy was adopted and staff officer Kong Gi Myong whom Kim Hyong Jik had sent arrived. They had a number of raids, though only minor raids across the Amnok-gang, to their credit. Meanwhile, Won Dong Yu had sent out men to the adjacent Independence Army units and sometimes invited their representatives in his first efforts to inform them of the new policy and ally with them, but things had not turned out as expected. The doors were tightly shut; the units were inaccessible, and it had proved that it was virtually impossible to propagate the new policy among them. Quite a few Independence Army units, isolated and distrusting each other were scrambling for supremacy. Chon Yong Tae had reported on the situation to Kim Hyong Jik, and had been expecting an answer to this knotty problem from him. And now Kim Hyong Jik said that the most important thing was to consolidate the unit itself.

"That's right. I think it is necessary to begin by consolidating your unit."

"Yes...," answered Chon Yong Tae doubtfully.

"Of course, from what I saw during my last tour through the Chientao area, I can say that the high-ups and the rank and file are closely united in Won Dong Yu's unit and that it is properly equipped and has a high morale and is well disciplined. But I'm afraid his unit is not yet ready to lead the discordant Independence Army units in the border area."

"Certainly not. I agree with you on that."

"Won Dong Yu's unit should be built up as a model for all the armed forces in the independence movement along the border. For these forces cannot be persuaded or led by words. Only when Won Dong Yu's unit is solid enough to become

the main political and military force there, will the other independence armies be won over to support our policy. And only then can we consider an alliance with them."

Kim Hyong Jik's judgment and strategy were profound and far-sighted in all matters, big and small.

"Mr. Kim, that's something we hadn't even thought of," Chon Yong Tae said and took his hat off to him. For only now did he understand Kim Hyong Jik's true intentions.

"Tell Commander Won Dong Yu that we in the homeland will help him to the best of our ability," Kim Hyong Jik added. "The main question is how to strengthen his unit...."

Then Kim Hyong Jik dwelt on different problems: inspiring the whole unit from the commander to the rank and file with confidence, by thoroughly disseminating the new policy and strategy for independence; improving its armaments, tactics and discipline along modern lines; setting up a military academy for the systematic training of competent army cadres; and winning active help and support from the local population by skillful work among them.

As Chu Pung listened he was again struck with admiration. Never had he imagined that Kim Hyong Jik could be so well versed in military affairs as well.

Kim Hyong Jik went on to say calmly:

"Of course it will be a hard task... to build up an army along modern lines with nothing to fall back on in a foreign country. But I'm sure that it is possible if Commander Won Dong Yu is determined to do it and all the comrades, officers and men, make concerted efforts. As I said just now, we will give them all the help we can. Large sums of money and many people will be needed to procure new weapons, to set up a military academy, and to expand and strengthen their ranks. The independence fighters in the homeland will do everything they can to help them. As a first step, we will be sending them a dozen or so reliable young men and some money in about ten days." Kim Hyong Jik quietly ended.

"Mr. Kim!" Chon Yong Tae uttered in a trembling voice, and then was speechless for a minute. And he barely managed to get out the words "Thank you, sir...," his face showing delight and confidence.

Hong Jun Gol felt his heart begin to beat wildly. Somehow it seemed to him that Kim Hyong Jik had Hong Jun Gol and his comrades in mind when he said he would send a dozen

or so young men to Won Dong Yu's unit. Moreover, as he spoke, he had glanced at Chu Pung and him. The mere thought of taking up arms again to fight the Japs stirred his heart. "Send me there, please!" was on the tip of his tongue, but with an effort he held it back. Mr. Kim will surely give the task to Chu Pung and me, he thought. Hong watched him, excited.

"Now...," Kim Hyong Jik began, turning his face slowly towards Hong Jun Gol. Just at that moment footsteps were heard coming up the hill, and a white figure appeared through the pine trees. All of them strained their eyes in that direction. The man who stepped onto the flat rock was Ho Gi Son, who had been keeping watch in the exercise ground.

Kim Hyong Jik gazed calmly at the gasping man.

"Mr. Kim, Japanese police are coming into the village."

"Police?"

"Yes, sir. Three of them. One of them has gold-striped epaulettes. I think they all went into Pak Byong Tae's house."

Everyone stared at Kim Hyong Jik. Hong Jun Gol's hand went into the inner pocket of his jacket. But Kim Hyong Jik remained sitting unperturbed. He looked down intently on the village for a while before he turned to the comrades.

"Now I'll tell you what. Our discussion is over, so let's break up. Mr. Cho Pil U, you go with Mr. Pak Yun Hwan and Mr. Chon Yong Tae; they have to make a long journey; take them to Mr. Ryu's at Matan by slipping away across Mt. Ponghwa-san, and stay there overnight. And Mr. Hong, take Commander Chu Pung to Sangbami and hide yourselves at Mr. Ro's. Now, let's break up."

"Oh, please don't worry about us, sir," said Pak Yun Hwan glancing at him with a worried look. "We'll be all right once we get into the mountains. But you must hurry up and hide."

"I'll escort you, sir," said Hong Jun Gol stepping forward, his hand still in his jacket's inside pocket.

"Don't worry about me," said Kim Hyong Jik with composure, smiling. "But hurry. As for me, why should I hide? I am a village teacher, and must stay in the village. Mr. Hong, you go with Commander Chu Pung right away! Come to see me tonight. Sun Hui's father, you go down first."

He pressed their hands one by one, urging them to leave quickly. He remained, seeing off the departing comrades. When they had all disappeared into the woods, he looked at Pak

Byong Tae's house with a keen eye. Then he started down the hill.

The sun was setting and the evening was drawing in in the village.

When he reached the village he went straight to An Sin Do's. He had been lodging in the end-room at the old woman's house since the summer; for Chong Jin Gu's house, crowded with a large family and frequented by many visitors, was rather inconvenient. He made sure that there was no document or book which carried any clue, and then went to the school. As he was coming through the twig gate, he bumped into Duk Bu. His eyes wide open, Duk Bu said that three policemen had come to Pak Byong Tae's and that one of them was head of the thought control section. He added that after a lot of whispering with Pak Byong Tae the thought control chief had summoned him. The fellow with the sleek broad face had made searching inquiries; he asked him what had been taught in the evening classes and whether the teacher had spoken ill of Japan or preached Korean independence. He had even asked Duk Bu to show him his exercise books. Failing to get any clue from Duk Bu the fellow had sat there, vacant for a while, looking disappointed. Then he said coaxingly: "From now on you must watch the teacher more closely; don't miss the evening classes, and call at his lodging frequently. Take note of what he teaches, who comes to his place and what they talk about, what kind of books he reads, and tell your master all that you find out. Then your master will send you to the big school that is to open at the Koup sub-county seat next spring. When you graduate, he'll give you land and get you married. Understand?"

"H'm, sons of bitches," said Duk Bu to himself indignantly, clenching his fists. "Just try and do anything to the teacher!" Duk Bu had changed a great deal. He looked decent, tidy and serious now.

Hearing him out, Kim Hyong Jik thought a bit and said, "I see. Thank you, Duk Bu. But don't worry. Just go home now and come to school in the evening."

"Will there be school tonight, too?" Duk Bu asked, looking up wonderingly at the teacher.

"Why not tonight? Now go home quickly so that they don't suspect you."

Duk Bu stood staring at the teacher anxiously for a mo-

ment, then he turned away. Following the boy with his eyes, Kim Hyong Jik pondered: This is their third visit to the village. They don't seem to have scented anything. Maybe they are trying to keep a sharp watch? And this time three of them have come, including the thought control chief. It is strange. I must be more careful from now on, he decided and went on to the school.

4

As usual, when supper was over at every home in the village, the evening school bell rang out. The pupils flocked to the school from Tongkyon, Undong-gol, Sojae, and even from Sangbami and Chungbami. The schoolroom was crowded. Most of the students were young, but there were also middle-aged men such as Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo and Choe the Glib among them, and in a corner there were several girls, their hair hanging down in pigtails. They were noisy usually from the moment they met on their way to school, but this evening they sat quietly with uneasy expressions in their eyes, waiting for Kim Hyong Jik to come. For the whole village knew that three policemen had been at Pak Byong Tae's earlier in the evening.

Presently the door opened and Kim Hyong Jik entered in his *turumagi*. All eyes were turned on him at once. But there was nothing unusual about him, he was smiling and composed. From the platform he ran his eye over the class. He instantly perceived a shade of anxiety in the stiff faces.

"Let us begin the lesson. Today we are going to learn the Korean alphabet. You have worked so hard that most of you can read and write easy words now. Tonight we'll see how many alphabet signs there are in our language and how they combine to make our syllabic letters. I'll write the alphabet on the blackboard. Please copy the letters in your exercise books."

Kim Hyong Jik picked up a piece of chalk and turned round to face the blackboard. Only then did the students open their exercise books or take out their pencils.

He wrote alphabet on the blackboard, pronouncing the

signs one by one. And the pupils copied them, wetting their pencils on the tips of their tongues.

The teacher wrote up the whole alphabet, and then looked around at the class. Occasionally Ho Gi Son, Duk Bu, Chun Bo and Sok Man raised their eyes to study Kim Hyong Jik's face. He realized that the pupils had misgivings because the Japanese police had been in the village. He decided that if he was going to conduct his lesson properly this evening, he had better relieve their anxiety and tried to find a way. When the pupils had finished copying, he went on with the lesson.

"As you see, our alphabet is made up of 19 consonants and 21 vowels. Although we have so far learned more than a thousand words and there are hundreds of thousands of words, you can write any of them if only you know the 40 consonants and vowels. Now, let us see how letters are made up of consonants and vowels.

"'ㄱ' (*k*) and 'ㅏ' (*a*) make '가' (*ka*); 'ㄱ'(*k*) and 'ㅗ' (*o*) make '고' (*ko*); and 'ㄱ' (*k*) and 'ㅜ' (*u*) make '구' (*ku*). So in our language a consonant and a vowel combine to make a full letter. There are not that many signs and their pronunciation clear and simple, so it is very easy to make characters. Therefore, anyone can learn it without effort. Though simple and plain, they can denote every sound and meaning. There are more than a hundred languages throughout the world, but we can say that few of them are as excellent as the Korean. Yet in the past our aristocratic officials used to write in characters borrowed from a foreign country, though they had a much better alphabet to write their own speech. Let me tell you a funny story. Once upon a time, it happened at the seat of Pukchang County, Pyongan Province...."

Thus, Kim Hyong Jik digressed from the main subject and began to tell an old tale, until the pupils were carried away by it. It was about the magistrate and nobles of the county making a mess of themselves because they had worshipped the foreign characters as "real" writing and despised their own alphabet as "rubbishy" Korean alphabet.

"One summer day the magistrate and eminent noblemen and scholars of the Pukchang district sat cooling themselves in the shade of a huge tree in the centre of the township to avoid the heat of the dog days. These leisured people passed time playing chess and checkers, and then held a drinking bout. Their spirits rising under the influence of liquor, each began

boasting of his learning."

All the students gazed at the teacher, deeply interested.

"A peddler who was passing by with a bundle slung across his back saw the dignitaries and went up to them. He said to the magistrate, 'I am so sorry to disturb you noblemen's banquet, sir, but allow me to complain to you of my outrageous treatment and appeal to you for justice on my own humble behalf.' With this he prostrated himself before the magistrate. The magistrate looked angrily on the peddler and bawled, 'What is your complaint?'

" 'Oh, I'm a dealer in red pepper powder in this township, sir,' replied the peddler. 'Today I happened to pass by the administration office of the township, when I was stopped and searched. And—Lord bless me!—I was taken into custody and given buttock floggings till I was nearly dead, just because my paper for red pepper powder dealing was written in Korean characters. I've just come from there. I feel I've been so preposterously wronged. That's why I've come to complain to you of the injustice. Please take up and investigate the case on my humble behalf, sir.' The magistrate reproached him, saying, 'Then why did you use the forbidden alphabet of the lowly instead of the real characters of the nobles that the state demands?' The pepper powder dealer replied, 'I don't know the characters. Please show me how to write powdered red pepper in real characters. Then, from now on I'll write it that way, sir.'

"At this, the magistrate became silent; for though he racked his brains he could not work out how to write the words in Chinese characters. So the magistrate stole glances at the noblemen seated at his side, hoping to get some helpful hints from them, but the noblemen, too, sat nonplussed, all muttering 'red pepper powder', 'red pepper powder' under their breath."

Kim Hyong Jik stopped and looked round at the pupils. They were gazing at the teacher, absorbed in the story he was telling; and the set expressions had left their faces. The teacher resumed his story:

"The nobles had been inflated with pride that they had been well-read in the Four Books and Three Classics of Confucius—Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, Mencius, the Analects, and the Book of Odes, the History and Changes. But, now an insignificant peddler of red pepper powder had made them sweat. They went red about the gills. They looked at each other without a word, at a loss for an answer, when

Kim the peasant who had happened to witness the scene on his way to the fields after lunch burst out laughing.

" 'You insolent fellow! How dare you laugh so loudly in the presence of noblemen?' shouted the vexed magistrate, at last able to give vent to his rage.

" 'Excuse me, sir. But how can I help but laughing when I see you nobles at a loss how to write those words?' answered the peasant full of confidence. 'Though a mere peasant who lives by tilling land with a hoe, I can spell the words for red pepper powder, sir.'

"At this the magistrate flared up. 'You rascal!' he shouted. 'Shameless fellow, that you are. Even the well-read scholars do not know how to write red pepper powder. And you, a lowly plebeian, dare to pretend you know? How dare you prattle such impertinent nonsense?' And, green with rage, he threw a writing brush to the peasant, barking impetuously, 'You scoundrel! Write it down this minute! If you fail, you will be cut to pieces.'

"But the peasant stepped forward towards the magistrate quite unaffected and said, 'I don't need a writing brush. Just watch this, sir.' He pulled out his hoe and, holding it upside down, scratched a big cross (+) on the ground, calmly declaring, 'This (|) is drawn plumb, so it means *kochu* (which signifies either red pepper or plumb—*Tr.*) and this (—) goes crossways, and it means *karu* (signifies either powder or crossways—*Tr.*), you see? That is how one writes red pepper powder, sir.' "

All the evening school pupils burst out laughing and clapped their hands.

When the laughter subsided, the teacher went on:

"The red pepper powder dealer who had been waiting prostrate for the magistrate's judgment sprang to his feet, slapping his lap with his hand and exclaimed in admiration, 'This is exactly the right character for red pepper powder!' The magistrate and noblemen under the big tree had disgraced themselves because they had been proud of their 'real' writing." The teacher's story was over.

At that moment, the door swung open and Gap Dol, the son of Chun Bo, ran in. The boy looked very excited, and all eyes turned to him.

"Mr. Kim, policemen are coming to the school," he said. He had been on the lookout outside with Yong Chun, the son of Choe Sok Man.

"Policemen?"

"What are they coming here for?"

There was a hubbub among the students and their faces looked tense.

But Kim Hyong Jik remained calm and looked out of the open door for a while, before he said: "Don't worry. Calm yourselves, everybody. Let's get our lesson going. Thank you, Gap Dol. You may go. Well, then, let's continue with our study of the Korean alphabet. I'll read the letters first, and you say them after me. *Kiuk*...."

The teacher read the letters on the blackboard, pointing to them one by one. The pupils' voices, soft at first, gradually began to rise. The teacher's stout-hearted calm invigorated the pupils.

"*Riul, mium*...," the reading voices rang and echoed round the room.

Feet shuffled on the ground outside. Then all three classroom doors burst open. The students' voices stopped short. The policemen walked into the room in their great boots, rattling their sabres; there were three of them. The one with a sleek, broad face who had come in by the door nearest to the teacher's desk was the chief of the thought control section. He surveyed the teacher, the letters on the blackboard and then the pupils with his large goggle eyes; then turned to the other two policemen and nodded. The two nodded back, and stepped forward onto the mat towards the pupils, while the chief approached the teacher. Kim Hyong Jik's calm eyes which had been staring them showed a sharp glint.

"How can you be so rude?" The teacher's stern voice rang out. The three policemen stopped, transfixed. The section chief stared Kim Hyong Jik. Taken aback by the teacher's defiance, the chief faltered and then blurted out, "We're here to make an investigation by orders of the authorities."

"If you've got anything to investigate, you should go through the formalities. Surely it is outrageous to intrude into a classroom while a lesson is in progress."

"Outrageous? What's outrageous?"

"It's outrageous," said the teacher sharply. "This is a school, which is inviolable. Moreover, it is a school that has been authorized by your law. A school is sacrosanct. It is against your laws to break into a classroom in the middle of a lesson, under arms and with your boots on. Get out and, if you

need to make an investigation, do it when the lessons are over, after the due formalities."

"Oho, this is quite something!" the section chief muttered—he could not find the right words for the situation. It was a slap in the face from one he had belittled. He avoided the teacher's sharp eyes and looked at the students. Emboldened by their teacher's dignified, cool attitude, the pupils fixed their sharp, indignant eyes on the section chief. His fleshy cheeks twitched convulsively. But he could do nothing. For a while he seemed to try to check his anger, and murmured, "All right, then. Carry on with your lessons. We'll stay here and watch until the lessons are over." He had thought that since they were in the classroom, nothing could go wrong with their investigation even if they had to wait till the end of the lessons and that, moreover, it might be interesting to see the class at work.

"Do as you please," said Kim Hyong Jik. "But you must take your boots off. How can you, who call yourselves a civilized people, tread on the mat in muddy boots, the mat that others only step on in their socks?"

"What? You're asking policemen, guardians of the law, to take their boots off?" retorted the section chief going red again.

"I am simply demanding you to take your boots off in here. That has nothing to do with your law guarding."

Kim Hyong Jik's argument was flawless and the Jap was stuck for a reply. His colour came and went, but there was no help for it, they had to go out to the earthen bank and take their boots off. Then they came back into the room. And the teacher carried on with the lesson.

"*Kiuk, niun, digut, riul, mium...*," the teacher and pupils went on endlessly, reading and repeating. The same thing was repeated over and over, ten times, twenty times and more. The pupils understood the teacher's intention and deliberately drew out the sounds:

"*Ki-i-uk, ni-i-un....*"

At first the minions of the law stood arrogantly by the doors, goggling to search for some clues, but they were soon fed up with the endless "*ki-i-uk, ni-i-un....*" The two policemen sat down and began to nod. Only the chief of the thought control section sat upright, glaring at the pupils.

The class ended late at night. Then the policemen examined

everything—Kim Hyong Jik's teaching plans, exercise books, cabinets, files, fixtures, the lot, but they found nothing suspicious. The chief stood there for a while looking discouraged, and then they went. When they had gone, the whole class burst out laughing. It was the first time ever they had held their own against the Japs.

Meanwhile the Japs spent the night boozing at Pak Byong Tae's, they did not leave till noon next day, after instructing Pak to keep a careful watch on Kim Hyong Jik.

Hong Jun Gol and Chu Pung had left for Sangbami, but halfway there they turned back. They were worried that Kim Hyong Jik might be in danger, and they felt they could not go on. They hid on the hill behind the school, released the safety-catches on their pistols and waited, determined to save Kim Hyong Jik at all costs, or if worst came to the worst, to die fighting. But the Japanese went back empty-handed. Hong Jun Gol and Chu Pung spent a whole night and day on the hill. Then at dusk they went down to An Sin Do's to see Kim Hyong Jik.

"I'm so relieved that nothing happened to you," Chu Pung said, unable to conceal his joy at seeing Kim Hyong Jik who met them with open arms.

"Nothing serious. They are dogs who sniff at everything." Kim Hyong Jik was so unconcerned that both men had to laugh. Now they were all seated, and Kim Hyong Jik started to speak:

"Commander Chu Pung, the other night I told you everything in detail, and so I have little left to say. You and Mr. Hong should try and muster more people from among the erstwhile Righteous Volunteers as well as youths from the Songchon, Yangdok and Nyongwon areas. You two are doing a very important work for us. Commander Chu Pung, please go on giving the young men a good military training, as you have been doing; train a lot of soldiers."

"Very well, sir. I'll do my best." Chu Pung's answer was brief, but at the back of his heart he was firmly resolved to spend the rest of his life on Kim Hyong Jik's cause.

Kim Hyong Jik turned to Hong Jun Gol and said:

"Now let me say a few words about your activities. You say you have set up an evening school at Chang-gol Village. That's very good. And you did well to call in the woman teacher Pyon Ok Rim. Please give her these textbooks to help her." He handed over a collection of textbooks that he used at Myong-

sin School, and then went on:

"Work well with Miss Pyon, and in due time let her know our purpose. I think we could train her into a good woman worker for the independence movement."

"A woman worker for the independence movement?" Hong Jun Gol asked, taken aback. He had never thought of that.

"If we are to awaken and rouse up the women, we will have to train many women workers for the independence movement."

"I understand."

"And I have an urgent matter to discuss with you," said Kim Hyong Jik gravely. "As I told Mr. Chon Yong Tae yesterday, I'm planning to pick out a dozen or so staunch young men at home to send to Won Dong Yu's unit. What would you say about this, Mr. Hong?"

No sooner had Kim Hyong Jik said this than Hong Jun Gol edged closer up to him, his heart beating fast.

"Mr. Kim, I wanted to talk to you about this too.... There is no need to ask me. Of course I'll go with my comrades."

"You, Mr. Hong?" Kim Hyong Jik smiled.

"Yes, sir." Hong Jun Gol's colour heightened.

"That's not what I meant. I am asking you if you can recommend about five men from among those youths to whom you, Mr. Hong, and Commander Chu Pung, have given military drill."

"But what about me?" Hong Jun Gol was discouraged.

"Don't lose heart. The time will come when you and I and all the rest of our comrades will have to take up arms. But, for the present, the work you are doing in Songchon is more important. Training scores and hundreds of people is more valuable to the independence movement than you taking up arms."

"I get you, sir," Hong Jun Gol agreed reluctantly.

When the talk was over, Chu Pung and Hong Jun Gol bade farewell to Kim Hyong Jik and left. Kim Hyong Jik went out of the village with them to see them off. It was pitch dark in the plain. Hong Jun Gol had a worry which weighed on his mind all the time. As he was about to go away leaving Kim Hyong Jik standing in the dark, the worry gnawed at him unbearably. He went back to Kim Hyong Jik.

"I have something to say, sir," he said.

"What is it?" Kim Hyong Jik looked questioningly at Hong

Jun Gol, who had returned so abruptly and looked so serious.

"I'm worried about your safety. One of our comrades should come and stay with you, I think it should be me. Now that we have Commander Chu Pung in Songchon, things will be all right there without me...."

Kim Hyong Jik was silent for some time, his face hidden in the darkness.

"Thank you, Mr. Hong. But you really need not worry. Everyone in this village looks after me, so there's no need to worry at all. Go and be easy in your mind."

Hong Jun Gol was standing speechless. Chu Pung, who was behind him, was also gazing at Kim Hyong Jik, his eyes full of respect. Looking down on the village from the hiding place on the hill the night before, he and Hong Jun Gol had talked over how to guard him. But Kim Hyong Jik was so unworried that Chu Pung could not find any words either. Chu Pung thought of the village folk who had stood watch and had kept Kim Hyong Jik informed of every move the police made during their meeting behind the big rock yesterday.

The thought came to Chu Pung that because of his great purpose, his noble character and moral qualities, Kim Hyong Jik, respected by the people, was, in fact, working under their collective protection.

Suddenly, Chu Pung's heart warmed as it struck him that this year, this far from ordinary autumn when he had learnt of Kim Hyong Jik's purpose and had, moreover, met him in person, was literally, for him, a year of rebirth, for he had been as good as dead till then.

"Don't worry about me," said Kim Hyong Jik. "Take care of yourselves as you go back."

"Then, good-bye, sir."

Bidding him farewell together, Chu Pung and Hong Jun Gol made a deep bow before Kim Hyong Jik.

CHAPTER V

THE BEACON

1

Jung Son stood on the bleak river bank at the foot of Mangyong-bong Hill.

The sky was grimly overcast, and a raw early spring wind rose from the surface of the water. The dry weeds rustled on the bank as the river, flooded by the thaw, raced down in torrents, breaking furiously against the shores. Occasionally chunks of drift ice whirled down river as if terrified only to be caught up by a heavy wave, and smashed against another.

A small boat moored to a stake on Tongrim ferry was knocked this way and that by the fierce waves.

Jung Son stood still, staring at the Taedong-gang roughened by the thaw. He wore a pink jacket and green waistcoat and thickly-padded dark cotton trousers.

He had been standing on the bank for a long time, but still he did not stir.

He longed for his father. But his father did not come. He had been gone since this time last year. The peach tree in front of his house had blossomed since his father went; the blossom had faded, and the summer when the Three Brothers Poplars—they said his father had planted them—were covered in lush leaves had long passed. When the autumn dyed Mangyong-bong Hill crimson, Jung Son had remembered how he used to sit on his father's lap while he told stories. Then autumn too had given way and winter froze Tongrim ferry whence his father had left and snowstorms roared across the river. Winter had been wearisome and gloomy for

no boat could navigate the ice and only spring might bring his father back.

Jung Son was longing for his father. Even while at play with the boys in the village, Jung Son felt that longing every time that Tongrim ferry came in sight, and he would leave the game and run off to the ferry.

Now that the ice had melted, Jung Son went to the ferry almost everyday, but still his father did not come. There were few boats on the water as yet. Sometimes, a white sail would appear around the distant bend up near Pyongyang. Then he would stand motionless until the boat sailed past Tongrim ferry. It might be too early to sail now.

Once he asked Mother.

"Mama, where was Papa gone?"

"Papa? He went to Kangdong very far from here."

"Why?"

Mother hesitated but seeing his son's serious expression, she smilingly replied.

"He was gone to win our country back from the Japs."

This reminded him of what he used to hear sitting on Father's lap on Mangyong-bong Hill.

So Papa isn't coming because he has not got the country back yet, thought Jung Son. Is it harder work than the farming Grandpa and Mama did? He had always seen Grandpa and Mama and all the family get up at dawn and work till dusk, ploughing and sowing in the spring and hoeing in the scorching sun in the summer. Whenever he thought of his father, he would feel an urge to grow up quickly and carry a sword and gun to help his father beat the Japs.

Jung Son looked up. The sun glimmered through the clouds high in the gloomy overcast sky, and suddenly he realized that it must be past noon and that Mama must be waiting for him. He took another look towards Pyongyang before he walked slowly homeward, through the rustling reeds along the riverside singing softly:

If the grass and trees on the South Hill had eyes
They would weep with us.
If all the fishes in the East Sea had minds
They would grieve with us.

Jung Son had often sung this song since his father had

gone away. Last winter when his father had come home from Chientao, he had taught the song to his family, and Jung Son knew it well; and he liked it though he was too young to grasp the full meaning.

He came down from Mangyong-bong Hill and was walking along the Sunhwa-gang River, then stopped. He stared towards the Three Brothers Poplars standing on the edge of the field not far from his home. He loved the trees so. He had been told that his father had brought the saplings from Pyongyang the year before he was born. He used to water them with Father and kill the insects on them. Last summer, with his father away, he had watered them with his younger uncle. Perhaps that was why they had been thick with leaves and why all three of them soared up into the sky.

Jung Son loved the Three Brothers Poplars and he called them Papa's Trees. Whenever he happened to pass them he always stopped and looked up at them for a long while. Now back from the deserted Tongrim ferry where he had waited for Father in vain, his heart was filled with longing for him as he looked up at the trees. He ran straight up to them and faced them. The boughs, which spread up into the frowning sky, swayed in the wind. The buds were not yet out on the trees, but there was something moist about them and before long every bough would be light green as the plump buds gave out their shoots.

Jung Son looked at the shaking trees affectionately. They had told him that the trees were planted the year before he was born and now they were ten times as tall as he.

Why do trees grow so fast and men so slow, he wondered. He wondered and wondered. Father always said that men are first in the world. He said that there was nothing a man could not do once he made up his mind. So why shouldn't men grow the fastest? Why should they grow up slower than the trees? If I could grow as fast as they, Jung Son thought, I could have gone with Papa on the boat last summer to help him get our country back.

Poplar trees, why have you grown up so quickly, asked Jung Son looking up at them. The trees only nodded their tops and Jung Son sighed.

At that moment he heard a distant voice calling "Jung Son" He slowly turned his head—it was Mother, standing by the well, a water jar on her head. Jung Son's eyes brightened.

"Mama—" Jung Son ran towards her and Mother Kang Ban Sok looked lovingly at her son.

"Aren't you hungry? Let's take the water home and eat."

Mother watched her son's face flushed with the cold spring wind.

"I'm not hungry, Mama. Give me the bucket, I'll fetch the water," he said taking the bucket from her.

"Don't drop it down the well, son."

"I won't. I fetched the water yesterday, when Auntie was here."

His legs well apart, Jung Son stood beside the well letting the bucket down on the rope. Mother was a little worried as she watched her son, but then she smiled now and put the jar down by the well.

As her son filled the jar with the clear water to overflowing, his mother turned over the gourd in the water. Jung Son quickly picked up the head pad and put it on his mother's head. His mother carried the jar and Jung Son the empty water-bucket. Jung Son walked ahead, then stopped and waited for his mother to catch up with him, and asked her.

"Mama, why do trees grow faster than people?"

His mother was so taken aback that she stopped walking. And she looked down at her son's inquisitive eyes. Then he realized that his question had confused her. So, with a shy smile, he told her that he was thinking of the Three Brothers Poplars, and his mother smiled, moved at her son's sensitive and profound idea.

It must be longing for his father that gave him such ideas, his mother thought.

Walking leisurely, his mother said.

"Darling, the trees seem to be growing very fast, though really it is men who grow the faster."

"Why? The Three Brothers Poplars are not much older than me, but they are ten times as big."

Jung Son looked doubtful.

"The trees grow tall but they have no minds. Men do not grow very tall, but their minds grow and grow."

"Their minds grow?"

"Yes, those three are already quite tall, but they don't even know they are growing in this lovely Mangyongdae, that the Japs have stolen our country, nor that your father

who looked after them is fighting hard far away from home to get our country back. The trees don't know, they will just grow and grow, taller and taller until they age and die. But you Jung Son, you already know all that. So you are learning and growing strong so that one day you may help your father in the fight to get our country back."

"Yes, Mama. The trees don't know anything."

"So men grow up faster, do they not?"

"So men are first in the world, aren't they, Mama?"

"Of course they are."

Now everything was clear and Jung Son's eyes shone brightly.

"Let's go on in. Grandpa and the others must be back from the fields...."

Jung Son bounced towards home, water-bucket in hand, and Kang Ban Sok walked on watching her son satisfied. When she had come out for water, she had noticed her son looking pensively at the Three Brothers Poplars. His image was still in her eye. She, too, was moved whenever she saw the trees. One day, when he was still student at Sungsil School, her husband had planted the three trees with his two younger brothers, and had said:

"...We must fight the Japs and save the country from decline. When the green tops of these trees soar high into the sky our homeland will be free and independent. Till that day let each one of us fight, unyielding. And after independence we will build a new and happy country and live blessed lives." These words rang in her ears, and she looked fondly at the trees, growing taller year by year.

But now, when she looked at the bare branches of the trees, she would start worrying about her husband. There had been no news since his last letter, in the winter. And though she knew her husband did not have the time to write to her often, she longed for letters from him. Sometimes she thought that maybe she should go to Naedong to her husband to give him what little help she could. The other day she had even taken up a writing brush and sat down at the table to put this in a letter, but she had thought the better of it. She had got used to giving him devoted help without a word, without ever meddling in his business. And she was certain he would call her if he needed her help. He had promised that last spring, the evening before he went.

This morning Great-grandmother had looked at a magpie shrieking on the ash tree in the yard, and had said there might be news from Jung Son's father. So Kang Ban Sok wondered if she might hear from him today....

Indulging in these disjointed musings, Kang Ban Sok hurried along. Jung Son had already flung open the twig gate and darted in, calling Grandmother.

Kang Ban Sok followed and went into the kitchen. She put down the water jar and made up a fire in the fireplace. She heard a voice and much tongue clicking coming from the room.

"So you've been to the ferry again? You must be frozen. Come over here, this is the warmest place." It was Great-grandmother.

As the porridge in the pot began to steam, she heard footsteps and a hum of voices. She thought the sounds came from the fields, when the kitchen door opened and her sister-in-law came in quite delighted.

"You're late, you must be hungry...," said Kang Ban Sok, putting more wood on the fire.

"No, sister, we're not," her sister-in-law crouched down beside her and, taking her hand, said, "I've got good news. Guess what?"

"Good news?"

Kang Ban Sok looked enquiringly at her sister-in-law, whose mischievous smile and clear eyes still reminded of a young unmarried girl. She had recovered from the chronic eye-trouble she had had since before marriage, thanks to the salt-water treatment Kang Ban Sok had given her morning and evening.

"Our brother-in-law sent a messenger from Kangdong."

"From Kangdong?!"

"He has just moored his boat at the ferry."

She was just going to tell her more, when the kitchen's inner door opened.

"Jung Son's mother, come in a minute." It was her grandmother-in-law.

"I'm coming," said Kang Ban Sok rather confused. She got to her feet, but hesitated for a moment.

"Go on in, sister. Leave the work to me."

"Then help me cook some rice for our guest."

Gripped by emotion, she pulled her clothes straight and

went in.

A middle-aged stranger in peasant dress sat with her father-in-law, mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law. Jung Son sat beside his great-grandmother, watching the stranger closely. In the end-room, the brothers and sisters-in-law were talking in undertones.

"This is a visitor from Naedong," her grandmother-in-law said.

Kang Ban Sok bowed slightly, remaining crouched, and greeted the man with "You have had a long hard journey."

The guest was disconcerted and, rising to his feet, exchanged greetings with her.

"Oh, you're Mrs. Kim? I'm Ho Gi Son from Naedong. I've learned a lot from Mr. Kim Hyong Jik."

Then there was a pause, until her father-in-law broke the silence, saying:

"Our guest has brought a message from Jung Son's father."

Kang Ban Sok bent her head to glance at an envelop lying in front of her father-in-law.

"He wants me to send you and Jung Son to Naedong. He says it would be a help to him. What do you think about it?"

Her father-in-law was a reticent man, who sometimes hardly said a word all day. But he was thoughtful and intelligent.

"He says it would be a help to him,"—these words showed her father-in-law's keen interest in his son's activities.

"I will do what you wish, Father," replied Kang Ban Sok modestly. There was another silence in the room. Presently her father-in-law said:

"Well, then, the boat is waiting, so you'd better get ready to leave in the morning."

"Mr. Kim said he'd bring his family later, but we insisted on his sending for them right away," said Ho Gi Son. "But I'm afraid it might be hard for Mrs. Kim because the house is not in very good order yet, sir."

"Oh, don't worry. I'm sure my son has given to you folk at Naedong enough headaches."

"Not at all, sir. Since Mr. Kim came to our place we are, for the first time in our lives, living like men, sir."

"Thank you for your kind words."

Then Kang Ban Sok's grandmother-in-law interrupted the conversation.

"Look, son," she said, "I'd like to go with Jung Son's mother to see the place."

Her father-in-law looked at her and saw on her face that she really wanted to go, and everybody in the room understood how she felt.

"Please do, Mother."

Kang Ban Sok saw a tender smile on her father-in-law's face.

"Yes, I will. Now, Jung Son, aren't you happy to be going to your father?" Great-grandmother asked, stroking Jung Son's head; he had been listening to grown-ups attentively. He looked at Great-grandmother and then at Mother and nodded, grinning. His clear and intelligent eyes were filled with delight.

"Ho, ho, ho. There's a clever boy...." his grandfather laughed boisterously. All the rest of the family smiled looking lovingly at Jung Son.

As she heard her younger son waking up in the end-room, Kang Ban Sok got quietly to her feet and left the room.

That night Kang Ban Sok was in the end-room absorbed in her sewing. It was getting late. Her younger son was sleeping peacefully in the warmest corner of the room wrapped up in a quilt. In the middle room Jung Son had been playing noisily with his uncles and aunts, but they must be asleep now, for all was quiet. She could only hear the humming of the loom and the rustling of the rope being twisted in the main room. She had heard these sounds every night for the last ten years. But tonight the sounds aroused an unusual emotion in her, for she would not hear them any more, for tomorrow she would be leaving with two little sons for Kangdong.

"So it is already ten whole years now...."

Kang Ban Sok was surprised in spite of herself. It seemed only yesterday, but ten years had passed since she had first looked at the lovely scene of Mangyongdae through a tiny window in the palanquin as big as the palm of her hand.

She was lost in deep reverie. The eldest daughter-in-law in a family of twelve, mother of two children, wife of a revolutionary, she looked back over the last ten years

with a swelling heart. There had indeed been hardship and sorrow, but on the whole it seemed to her those ten years had been happy.

Her reverie was broken by the sound of footsteps on the earthen bank, the door opened quietly, and a voice said, "Aren't you going to bed?" Mother-in-law came in, with a big bundle in her arms wrapped in a huge cloth. Kang Ban Sok stood up, quickly putting her sewing aside.

"Sit down. You should have been in bed early tonight.... You still have things to do before you go?"

"Well, nothing much...." Kang Ban Sok replied falteringly.

Sitting facing her, her mother-in-law pushed the bundle over to Kang Ban Sok.

"Put these things on Jung Son tomorrow morning."

Kang Ban Sok was surprised; she stared at the bundle and opened it. She found a beautifully dyed new cotton jacket and trousers and a *turumagi*. There was even a pair of bast sandals with flower pattern on it.

"Mother, you shouldn't... he does have some clothes to wear."

It warmed Kang Ban Sok's heart.

"Nothing very good. Jung Son will be five this spring, but we have been unable to give him any silk clothes as others do. I did want to give him a silk suit this spring, but I couldn't manage it. I was keeping these for his birthday, but now that he is leaving, put them on him."

"Silk clothes are not the only good clothes to wear, Mother."

Her heart urged her to say more, but she could not—she just handled the soft clothes lined with new cotton and the bast sandals gayly coloured with flower patterns. Her father-in-law had spent several nights making those bast sandals. Now her mother-in-law was as tongue-tied as he. They always tried not to betray any feeling and they seldom showed their pains or sorrows.

"That's true," her mother-in-law answered, "and while he was with us, well, it was all right, but now that he is leaving, I feel sorry about these things."

Her mother-in-law, always so diffident, must be very sad to express her innermost feelings like this tonight, and Kang Ban Sok did not know how to console her.

For a while the older woman looked fondly at her, her eyes resting on Kang Ban Sok's hardened knuckles and work-roughened hands. Kang Ban Sok covered her hands with her skirt, but the older woman stretched out her wrinkled hands and took Kang Ban Sok's in hers. Her mother-in-law's hands were warm.

"It's ten years since you came to this house...." Her mother's voice shook a little.

"Yes," murmured Kang Ban Sok.

"On your wedding day, I touched your beautiful hands; it seems only yesterday, and now they have got so rough...."

"Mother, don't talk like that." Kang Ban Sok stopped; her heart was full.

"These hands have taken care of a family of twelve, or wretchedly poor family at that. They must have been a hard ten years! You've never eaten your fill nor had a full night's sleep," and as she spoke her eyes filled with tears.

"Mother, please don't talk like that. I've lived here happily under the loving care of you and Father and the whole family. My hardships have been nothing compared with my elders' .... Do you think I came to this house seeking an easy life?" Kang Ban Sok spoke earnestly, holding her mother-in-law's hand. And she spoke honestly. For these ten years had been happy and worthwhile, living in an unusual atmosphere, among upright, decent human people.

"Thank you for saying that. You know all of us, Jung Son's father, your father-in-law and I and all the rest of the family were grateful for your considerate care, believe in you to whom we gladly entrusted our difficult household. But now that you are leaving, I worry about you."

"Don't worry too much, Mother. When Jung Son's father achieves his goal we all of us will gather and remember these days."

Kang Ban Sok tried hard to smile and ease her mother-in-law's heavy heart.

"Yes, you are right."

Only then Mother-in-law gave a smile too and wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes.

"Jung Son's mother, I have little to give you, no worthy parting gift. But there is something I would like to say."

"Oh, please."

Still holding Kang Ban Sok's hands in hers, Mother-in-

law went on calmly.

"As you know our family have always been poor. You know the crooked jar in which you have kept *kimchi* pickles ever since you came to this house?"

"Yes."

"It was here in the yard even before I came to this house, and I wondered how to use that jar which looks like a hunchback. One day Grandmother, holding my hands, told me about the jar. It was the autumn of the year she came to this house in marriage. She had to prepare the *kimchi* pickles but there was no jar. So she racked her brains, then she took in laundry and earned two pennies. She tied the money in her skirt string and went to the market."

"What happened?"

"How can you buy a jar with two pennies? She went right round the market looking, but in vain. Almost in tears, she was starting out for home towards dusk, when she saw that misshapen jar in a corner of the market place. The jar dealer was just packing up, an empty A-frame carrier on his back. She untied the two pennies and brought the jar home on her head. Grandmother said she felt like shedding tears of blood then. So the jar passed down through me to you; three generations of wives have used it...."

Kang Ban Sok looked astonished as her mother-in-law told about the crooked jar.

"And have you ever looked closely at the blade of the fodder-chopper in the cowshed? It's as thin as a chopstick now. If we had chopped only fodder for our own cattle, we would have no cause for complaint. But grandfather, father and sons, three generations, have chopped fodder three times a day for cattle owned by others. So, even the iron has worn down."

Kang Ban Sok carried a vivid picture of the fodder-chopper in the cowshed. You could hardly see the blade from the back. She had helped her brother-in-law chop fodder more than once.

"Our family has been poor for generations. So poor that we have nothing to give our sons, our daughters-in-law, our grandsons, however much we love them."

"But, Mother, I don't want luxury or comfort."

"I know that. That's why I'm telling this, though I have not been able to treat you as a mother-in-law should. But poor as we are, we have one great treasure handed down through the generations."

Mother-in-law said this, looking gravely at Kang Ban Sok. The daughter-in-law became attentive; she did not know what Mother-in-law had on mind.

"It is this family's uprightness and honesty, the will to live like men. In household affairs, the affairs of the nation or in their relationship with the neighbours, the people of this family have strong moral principles and a clear conscience.

"When Grandfather was alive he always used to say that a man had three duties: first, his duty to his country; second, his duty to his neighbours; and third, his duty to his family. Oh, yes, you know the song your husband wrote when you gave birth to Jung Son?"

"You mean the song that goes: 'Be a good son to your parents. A good friend to your neighbours. A hero for Korea.'"

"That's right. It is an attitude handed down in this family. And what is our great family pride? We have always been proud that it was Grandfather who led the battle to burn the Yankee's ship which sneaked into the Taedong-gang River, and today we are very much proud of Jung Son's father who is fighting with a far-reaching goal of national liberation."

"Mother, you are right." Kang Ban Sok had never imagined that her mother-in-law, always so diffident, could be harbouring such great thoughts.

"As you know, in our family we don't go in for a lot of talk. But even though they don't say much, Great-grandmother and Jung Son's Grandfather and all your husband's younger brothers and sisters take great pride in his devoted struggle for the country. But we who stay at home lack the means to support him in his work, though we are much concerned for him. So tonight I must ask you to...." She hesitated.

"Tell me, Mother." Kang Ban Sok urged Mother earnestly, though she could guess what she was going to say.

"We trust you. You'll have to take care of a poor family with two little ones and even help Jung Son's father, and you will face hard times. But I am sure that with these hard-working hands and with your stout heart you will do as we would wish. Remember that whether Jung Son's father achieves his goal and returns home will largely depend on you."

"Mother!" Kang Ban Sok almost cried; she had a big lump in her throat and could not go on.

"Don't worry about home. We have Hyong Rok here, and Hyong Gwon says that from this year on he will do his full

share on the farm. He asked me to tell this to his eldest brother and ask him not to worry about the family.... Yet I suppose I should not be talking to you like this, you who are more dependable than I."

"Mother!" Kang Ban Sok was crying and her eyes were hot. "I understand, Mother. I'll remember everything you've said."

It was as much as she could say to express the emotions in her heart, clasping her mother-in-law's hands.

"Thank you, darling. Now stop working for tonight—go to bed soon for you will be on the boat all day tomorrow. Jung Son is sleeping with his younger uncle."

Even after Mother-in-law had gone into the other room, Kang Ban Sok sat for a long time, unable to control her surging emotions.

She knew this family spirit. In these ten years all the family had warm hearts, but they did not wear them on their sleeves. They all worked hard from dawn till late at night; they all tried to give the tasty food and good clothes to other members of the family and all would volunteer for the tougher jobs.

Their attitudes towards their neighbours were the same. Grandmother and Mother were so kindhearted that when a family was starving they would take the last tiny handful of grain from the bottom of the rice jar, though they had nothing left for themselves. Father would weed a field for a poor family who had no help, even though his own field might suffer. All the neighbours would come to the "grave keeper's" for advice on problems, be they big or small.

Their sense of duty to the nation was still greater. She well remembered a summer's day two years after she came into this home, the day the Japs swallowed up Korea, when her father-in-law and husband and all the family refused their food, sat sorrowing all night, as in a house of mourning.

In those ten years Kang Ban Sok had discovered the family spirit, but hearing the touching stories from mother-in-law, Kang Ban Sok felt it in every fibre of her body.

Moreover all the family pinned their hopes on her who, as a revolutionary's wife, would accompany her husband on his thorny path for the rest of her days, who would have to bring up two sons, children of the family, to be "heroes of their country". She felt the burden heavy on her shoulders, yet she

felt happy, for it was a worthy task and she felt honoured. A firm resolve was being formed in Kang Ban Sok's heart.

Presently she picked up the sewing she had put aside. It was Father-in-law's clothes and she decided to get it finished even if it took her the whole night.

2

Early the next morning a tiny boat hoisted its sail at the misty Tongrim ferry.

Kang Ban Sok, her baby well wrapped in a quilt on her back and Grandmother-in-law in a heavy jacket and a hood settled on both sides of the boat. Jung Son wearing the blue *turumagi* his grandmother had made, a cotton towel round his neck, stood at the prow, looking back towards the receding landing stage. Ho Gi Son held the helm. The boat sailed smoothly before a crisp wind. The family and the villagers at the ferry who were seeing them off gradually got smaller.

Kang Ban Sok dabbed the corners of her eyes unremarked, with the end of the belt which fastened the baby to her back; she feared that Grandmother-in-law might see her. She had not shed tears even when she had parted with her husband, but now that she was on board the boat, separated from her old parents-in-law, brothers- and sisters-in-law, she could not stop the tears from welling up in her eyes. She could imagine how the parents-in-law were feeling; they had seen off their eldest son, the mainstay of the house here at this ferry last spring, and today it was their beloved grandsons and their daughter-in-law. Her heart ached at the thought that while she, as the eldest son's wife, had looked after the household, in ten years, she had never been able to give her in-laws more than thin porridge.

And now I'm leaving, she was thinking, and the family will have still harder times. Having wiped her eyes Kang Ban Sok again looked over at the landing stage. And she was somewhat comforted when she noticed the cotton jacket and trousers she had made for Father-in-law before she went.

"Grandpa—" her son shrilled suddenly and Kang Ban Sok

turned to look up. He had cupped his hands as he called out.

"Good-bye, Jung Son—" A chorus of nearly all the children in the neighbourhood called out. They had all been to see him the day before, and had come to the ferry to see their best friend off.

Their eyes full of tears, some of them had brought their favourite toys and other things out of their pockets to give to their departing friend.

"Good-bye!" Jung Son called back, jerked up his hand. Then everyone on the boat stared at the landing stage in silence. Soon the boat sailed round a bend, and they were out of sight. Only the top of Mangyong-bong Hill rose dimly above the clearing mist now. The wind blew gently and the weather was fine. The boat ran before the wind, past Turusom and Yanggak-do Islands, Ryongwang-jong Pavilion, Chongryu-byok Cliff and Rungna-do Island in the walled city of Pyong-yang, one of the loveliest spots of Korea.

As the red evening glow reflected on the waters, Maekjon ferry came in sight.

Ho Gi Son, who had been rowing at the stern, shaded his eyes with his hand to see the landing. Then he looked at Jung Son, saying: "Here we are. You see those people there? That's Maekjon ferry."

"We pull in there?"

"Yes."

"Who are they?"

"Must be the people who have come to meet you."

"To meet us?"

"Yes."

"Oh, do you think Papa is there too?"

"Must be."

"Oh, I do hope we get there quick."

Jung Son and Ho Gi Son who had become friends during the journey, which had taken many hours, were talking amicably. Hearing their conversation, Kang Ban Sok's heart began to beat faster. And not only because she was looking forward to the reunion with her husband, who had been away for more than a year. But the moment she had heard that he wanted her to come over to Naedong, she realized that this was no ordinary journey of a wife rejoining her husband. And particularly after having heard Mother-in-law's stirring stories the night before, she had reaffirmed the resolve she had made.

Hers was the responsibility of the wife of a revolutionary who had left his loved home and family to work in the revolutionary movement. A quite different life awaited her in Kangdong, a greater, more profound and more responsible life. In Namri, Mangyongdae, her help to her husband in his revolutionary work had been to be the invisible mainstay of the big family, and she had done all that she could to support him, but the new life in Naedong would ask much more of her.

Soon the boat tied up at Maekjon ferry, and people waiting there crowded round the newcomers as they got off the boat.

"Grandmother, it must have been a hard journey for you at your old age." Chong Jin Gu said, as if speaking for the people who were on the ferry.

"Thank you for coming to meet us here."

Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and other villagers loaded their luggage on an ox-cart. The ox stood waiting, jingling the bell tied round his neck.

"Well, let's get going now. There is a cold wind blowing on the river. Please get in the cart, Grandmother."

"No, that's all right," replied Grandmother, looking at everybody—she was looking for Kim Hyong Jik. Then Chong Jin Gu said apologetically.

"Mr. Kim couldn't come because he has lessons. I asked him to take an hour off, but he wouldn't and...."

"Is that so? Well, he is right. Let's get going. Jung Son, my dear, get up on the cart."

Grandmother felt relieved to hear what Chong Jin Gu had said, and called Jung Son who had been out on a dune, looking up at Mt. Ponghwa-san in the distance.

"I'd rather walk, Great-grandma."

Jung Son turned to her grinning, and started to walk. The people left, following the ox-cart.

"Here we are," said Choe Sok Man who had been driving the ox-cart. At that moment they heard a bell ringing from the village. Jung Son stopped walking; he had followed the ox-cart, looking at the unfamiliar hills and streams, the plains, the wheat and barley fields. He gazed towards the village whence the sound came for a moment and looking back over his shoulder, said:

"Mama, isn't Papa where the bell is ringing?"

Kang Ban Sok could not answer right away for she was reminded of the bell that used to ring at Sunhwa School at Mangyongdae.

Ho Gi Son who had been accompanying her, clicked his tongue and replied in her stead:

"How clever you are! Your papa is waiting out there."

"I'll go first," he said and he ran towards the school.

People were surging out of the village; obviously they knew of the party's arrival. The doors of the school house were flung open, and groups of children bounced out into the yard and ran towards them. Surrounded by people, Kang Ban Sok and Grandmother moved up the road towards the school, returning their greetings as they went. The children ran up to them and bowed.

"Pa—pa—" shouted Jung Son. He was flying like a bird. Along the road lined with mulberry trees came the slender Kim Hyong Jik in his *turumagi.*

"Ah, husband," it was on the tip of Kang Ban Sok's tongue to say it, but she managed to desist.

"Ah, it's you, Jung Son's father," Grandmother hurried forward.

"Papa—"

Jung Son ran into his father's arms.

"Ah, so you're here, Jung Son." The father was delighted and picked his son up in his arms.

"So you ran ahead, eh?" Father's face brightened with joy.

"Great-grandma, Mama and Chol Ju are coming, they're over there."

"I see. Let's go."

Kim Hyong Jik turned towards them, and Kang Ban Sok stopped walking.

Kim Hyong Jik speeded his pace and stopped in front of his grandmother. He put his son down and gave a deep bow.

"Grandmother, you must be very tired after your journey. I intended to visit you this spring, but I couldn't make it. Please forgive your disobedient grandson."

"Oh, never mind. Are you well?" Grandmother asked taking her grandson's hands. Moist eyes under wrinkled eyelids quivered with delight.

"Yes, I am."

"Oh, yes, Jung Son's mother is here too."

Grandmother let go of his hands and turned back.

"Thank you for coming," said Kim Hyong Jik, looking calmly at his wife. But when their eyes met, Kang Ban Sok saw warm affection in his look. She quickly studied his face. Something about him was more serious, more profound, but he looked thinner than when she had seen him last.

Kang Ban Sok could not reply, she just bent her head.

As the party approached the school, another crowds of people hurried out of the yard—Ho Gi Son's wife, old An Sin Do, Gomannyo's mother and other women from the neighbourhood. They had worked on the house in the school grounds, where Kim Hyong Jik's family would live since morning, and they had put an iron pot in the kitchen and clayed the fireplace. They had just finished cooking rice and had been waiting for the teacher's family to arrive. The women exchanged greetings happily among themselves and went in. It was warm inside; the floor had been amply heated. After freezing on the boat the group felt as if their bodies would melt.

From the moment she arrived at Maekjon ferry, Kang Ban Sok had hardly felt as if she were in a strange place; she had mixed with simple and kindhearted people who came to the house with her. The people sat down to the dinner so kindly prepared by the village women—the men in the one room and women in the other. After dinner the villagers chatted for a while and left, advising Kim Hyong Jik's family to have a good rest for they must be quite worn out.

In the warmest corner of the room Chol Ju slept, breathing peacefully. Jung Son was asleep, his head on his father's lap; he had not left his father for a moment.

Kim Hyong Jik looked down happily at his son's face, stroking his head. Grandmother and Kang Ban Sok also seated in the warmer corner looking at the sleeping boy.

"Jung Son has grown up almost beyond recognition in the last year, hasn't he?" Kim Hyong Jik said to nobody in particular. "I wonder what sort of man he will grow up into," retorted Grandmother. "He stuns us sometimes. He runs out of the house to catch the rainbow after every shower."

"To catch the rainbow?"

"Yes, grandson. At first he climbed up to the top of the ash tree in the yard, and I was thunderstruck when he stretched

out both his arms to catch the rainbow. And when he couldn't catch it, he looked up at the distant sky with his twinkling eyes and said: 'Grandma, the rainbow is hanging on the pine tree on Mangyong-bong,' and shot up the hill like an arrow. He came back after a while, crestfallen, and asked, 'Mama, why does the rainbow always run away?' Then his mother went into the kitchen and came out with a bowl of water and sprayed it, with her back against the sun. Jung Son jumped round, clapping his hands, crying out that there was the rainbow. But every time there was a rainbow after that, he said he didn't want the little rainbow; he liked the big ones in the sky, and would run up Mangyong-bong to try and fetch the big one." And Grandmother smiled at Jung Son.

"Ho, ho, ho. So he doesn't want little rainbows, wants to catch the big ones!" Kim Hyong Jik laughed, so did Kang Ban Sok. There was a warm happy atmosphere in the room.

"And he is so serious and deep. He was so anxious to see his father but he never betrayed it," and as Kang Ban Sok said this, Grandmother prodded her, saying, "Tell him."

"At dusk one day I was on my way home from the fields to make the supper and I saw him standing and staring, alone in front of the Three Brothers Poplars, quite absorbed in the rustling of the trees. He always called them Papa's Trees, because he missed you so. I felt rather sorry for him, and I stood and watched him for a while. He must have heard me coming, and turned back."

"What a boy!"

Kim Hyong Jik looked lovingly at his sleeping son's face.

"As he saw me standing behind him, he smiled embarrassed and said, 'Mama, aren't Papa's Trees growing well?' I took his hand and we were going home, when he stopped and asked me, 'Mama, when will Papa come?' and then, before I could reply, he said: 'I know. He'll come back when he has beaten the Japs and got back our country. Yes, Mama?' So I asked, 'How do you know?' He said, 'Papa told me so the day before he went.' That night I was sewing while Jung Son sat at your desk. He rubbed the inkstick on the inkstone, picked up a writing brush, and said, quite abruptly: 'Mama, teach me how to write "country" and "Papa"!' "

"What a boy! And then?"

"I wrote the words he wanted. And from that night on,

he tried to learn those letters. Now he can write them quite well. The night before we left he wrote them on a sheet of paper very carefully to show you. I put it in the chest over there."

"Ah. So that was what he meant. He said he had something to show me after the guests had been gone. Well, let me have a look at it."

Kang Ban Sok unlocked the carp-shaped lock and took out a nice-paper scroll. The handwriting was a little clumsy, but it was firm and powerful.

"Well written. Who would have believed this was done by a five-year-old? Well, well, well...."

Kim Hyong Jik was very pleased.

"Not only that. He has a very strong sense of justice, you know? Why, last autumn...."

Grandmother told a story about Jung Son teaching the son of the landlord, *chinsa Li,* a lesson when he bullied the other children in the neighbourhood.

They talked on and on about the sleeping boy, an endless lot of reminiscences.

When the night was well advanced, Grandmother went off to bed, and husband and wife sat facing each other.

"You look thinner. You must have had hard times," said Kim Hyong Jik, looking at her tenderly.

"Not at all. I was comfortable at home," Kang Ban Sok answered softly, her head slightly bowed.

"I can imagine what a hard time you had keeping house for a large poor family. I had planned to go home but could not for I could not spare the time."

"Don't worry. If your work goes well, I, too, will be satisfied."

"You are right. Knowing your attitude has enabled me to work without worrying, wherever I went. But I'm afraid your burden will be heavier from now on."

"That I expected when I came here."

"I thank you. And I knew you'd come, understanding and prepared. In fact I called you here because it would be an advantage to have my family with me. For once I have my family here and settle down, the villagers will put greater trust in us as of their own kind, and I can receive warmly my comrades who visit me frequently. And I especially need you here to guide the women."

"The women?"

Kang Ban Sok looked inquiringly.

"That's right. This village still has such feudal ideas that they are unwilling to send their daughters and wives to school, and the women themselves are reluctant to come. I've been trying hard but it is difficult for me. So you must do your share here."

"Me?"

"Yes. Why, are you afraid?"

Kim Hyong Jik looked smilingly at his wife. His look expressed unbounded faith in her.

"No. I'll try. If it will help your work.... I'll do my level best."

"Try. I'm sure you'll do a good job. And I'll tell you how things stand in this village and about the work we've done so far."

The night was far advanced. But there was still a light in the teacher's window and a hum of voices.

3

Kim Hyong Jik stood in the school grounds, seeing off the evening class students. Their voices and footsteps receded gradually.

Though March was near at hand, you could still feel the cold of winter at night. A chilly wind blew in from the Maekjon Plain. The earth was wet and soft in daytime but it froze again at night. But the wind carried the fresh warmth of the new season.

Looking over at the plain before him, Kim Hyong Jik inhaled deeply and as his lungs filled up he felt refreshed.

When he could no longer hear the students' footfalls and the village became shrouded in silence, he turned back slowly. Now was the time for him to settle to his own work; he gave lessons to regular students in the day and then taught the evening classes until late into the night. But it was in these final hours that he must tackle his harder and more urgent tasks.

A task was awaiting him now that would keep him up all

night. He walked leisurely into the yard of the inner wing. As he approached the earthen bank under the eaves, he stopped. He heard a singing voice coming out of the house.

Go gyo gu gyu
Go ahead, step by step,
Despite all hardships
And fly like the clouds.

It was his wife's clear contralto leading, and then other women sang it after her.

Then she led the next stanza.

Na nya no nyo
Neither you nor I
Grudge our love
For the country.

The song continued. The women sang with increasing vigour.

No nyo nu nyu
Known only too well
Is the fate of a slave.
Twenty millions
....

This was the *Alphabet Song* which Kang Don Uk, Kim Hyong Jik's father-in-law, who was at Chilgol, had written. There was an episode about the song among his wife's family. One day when Kang Ban Sok was still a girl, her father called her in and asked her to read the song. She read it through several times, and then she sang it to the tune of an old ballad. And it was said that the *Alphabet Song* had spread all around Kopyong sub-county, to the tune his wife had chosen. While in Nam-ri she had taught her sister-in-law and many other unlettered village women the Korean alphabet with this song—the alphabet, patriotism and opposition to Japan.

Kim Hyong Jik was grateful to his wife, as he listened to her voice. Now she was explaining the song. She was so good with people. It was only a week since she came here to Naedong, and already the women came to visit her every night,

bringing their needlework with them. The morning after she came she had set to clear the spring in front of the school; she repaired it, piling up the stones round it, and put a gourd there to ladle water. And every day at lunch time she went to the classroom and gave the pupils hot water and beanpaste soup boiled up with dried vegetables. And if she noticed some child who could not afford the lunch sneaking out furtively, she would go and take him into her house unnoticed to give him something to eat. If she saw children who had buttons missing or whose clothes were torn, she would take them home after school and mend their clothes. Already the whole village was praising his wife. He was grateful for this praise, or rather, he was grateful for her unstinted devotion and her help in his work. Kim Hyong Jik felt invigorated and more able to get ahead with his own work.

He turned round quietly and went back into the school grounds. He saw lights under the low eaves of the peasant houses huddling closely at the foot of Mt. Ponghwa-san. After evening classes, the villagers busied themselves preparing for the spring sowing. The sound of beating flat the starched washing came from a house. Then a twig gate opened and closed, followed by the barking of a dog. The quiet night scene in the village was very dear to him.

Now in the classroom he lit the lamp and sat at his desk. He read through what he had written the night before. Pencil in hand he was deep in thought. The rhythmical sound of the two round sticks helped him to concentrate.

All month he had been sitting up at night like this in the deserted classroom or the end-room of his house. And if he tired or lost the thread he would go up Mt. Ponghwa-san or down to the plain in front of the village, whether it was midnight or dawn. Taking advantage of the winter holidays he had visited different parts of the country to get first-hand knowledge of the situation and of his comrades' revolutionary activities.

He had come to the conclusion that the basic groundwork had been laid for forming the organization, the national organization that was now his immediate goal. He and his comrades decided to hold a preliminary meeting soon. And since his return he had put everything he'd got into his work, resting little if at all preparing for it working as he had never worked before.

Messengers and revolutionaries kept arriving bringing him new problems from the provinces of Pyongan, Hwanghae, Kyonggi, Chungchong, Kyongsang, and Cholla, from Chunggang and Linkiang, and other places at home and abroad, where local organizations had grown up rapidly.

Kim Hyong Jik had to help each of them work out solutions, to decide what action to take. At the same time he had been faced with having to map out the doctrine and objectives of the organization, form and structure, and the rules of action. It was no easy task. His was a hard struggle, blazing a path through a vast untrodden forest step by step. He had to do all this on top of the daily work at Myongsin School and running the evening classes. It seemed to him that there was one mountain after another in his way. Yet he was unafraid. His self-confidence, ardour and courage were only increasing.

His desk was always piled up with papers, magazines and books.

He had to read up on the experience of revolutionary organizations of other times and countries, to take their lessons into account and yet conceive an entirely new form of organization that would suit the Korean independence movement in its present situation. Slowly he began to see a clear outline of the body to be formed.

Sitting up in lamplight every night, Kim Hyong Jik put his heart's blood into every character he wrote on the blueprint for the organization. Sometimes he only got a single line written in a whole night; sometimes he wrote a short piece and put down his writing brush, racking his brain until first cock crowed. And sometimes he would cross out all that he had written the night before and sit gazing at a window that was getting lighter.

He well knew the significance of each character his writing brush made. One wrong word might seriously affect the fate of many comrades who trusted in him and the fate of the independence movement, the fate of his homeland and his people. And the damage might be irretrievable. Every character must change to the tens, hundreds, thousands of banners and spearheads which 20 million Koreans would take up. Moreover, as the constitution and the rules of a secret society, it must need be short, for it could not be printed. The wording should be plain and concise, the meaning profound, because it should

be taken in at first reading and then learned by heart so that they could apply it then and there. Therefore, he wrote each character with same devotion, with which a sculptor applies his chisel.

For three days he had been thinking about what to call the organization. He had written one name after another down on paper, only to cross them out—they did not suit the character and doctrine of the organization.

Needless to say, this organization should become the political body that would guide the revolutionary movement of all Korea, so it should involve the elite of the whole independence movement. The name itself should be different from those of all the previous independence organizations, it must be new and yet must sound familiar and intimate to the masses.

He set down thought after thought; he had no idea how late it was. The village women had long since left his house.

He remained seated, unaware that his wife had come out into the school grounds several times to look around and watch the classroom or that during their two rounds of the village, Gap Dol, Yong Chun, Sun Hui and other young school activists had peeped at their master through crack in the door and been quite worried.

Kim Hyong Jik would gaze thoughtfully into the dim light of the lamp whose shade was already sooty, spring to his feet to walk up and down the classroom—which was perceptibly colder now.

He stopped walking and stared in front of him. His eyes rested on the characters *Chiwon* in the frame beside the blackboard. His heart was heavy. He had thought of several names this evening but none of them had satisfied him. Some of them sounded too pompous, decorated like a gilded plate, and others which sounded better but failed to put over the organization's doctrine and aims.

He opened the door quietly and went out. A cold wind blew down from Mt. Ponghwa-san. Head was heavy after concentrating all night and it refreshed him. He did a few light exercises, raising his arms above his head and flexing them a few times, before walking. He crossed the school grounds and went up the road to the spring. He was afraid that morning would come and there would still be no name. But I must have it by tonight, come what may, he thought.

He went past the spring and walked up a small hill. For

a long while he looked up at the dark clouds floating across the sky and then turned round. At that moment he saw a dark figure lower down disappearing into a thicket of trees. But Kim Hyong Jik was as calm as ever. He stared for some moments in that direction and asked quietly, "Who's there?"

The dark figure sprang out of the thicket, apparently confused.

"It's me, sir."

"Why, it's Sun Hui's father. What's the matter?"

Kim Hyong Jik was quick to recognize Ho Gi Son's voice.

"Well, erh... I happened to be out of doors and as I spotted you taking a lone path..." Ho Gi Son faltered.

But Kim Hyong Jik understood. Ever since last summer the villagers had been discreetly looking after his personal safety. As he sat through the long nights, they watched in turns the light in the window of his room. He knew it well. His heart was full at the thought. These simple, warm-hearted and sturdy folks were pinning all their hopes on him; it made him feel very responsible.

Kim Hyong Jik walked down leisurely to Ho Gi Son.

"I'm afraid you've been having a hard time because of me. Don't worry about me tonight and go home. I'll go back too."

"Oh, never mind, sir. I've had a good sleep. It's not us but you who must rest. The villagers are very worried because you sit up all night and get so little sleep."

"Thank you. But seriously, don't you worry. I get all the sleep I need. I've been used to little sleep since my school days. Ha, ha...."

Kim Hyong Jik and Ho Gi Son walked down the hillock, chatting.

"May I ask you a question, sir?" Ho Gi Son blurted out as they passed the spring.

"What is it?" Kim Hyong Jik seemed ready to answer, but it took Ho Gi Son a few seconds before opening his mouth.

"When will our Korea be independent?"

The question was quite unexpected.

Kim Hyong Jik stopped and looked at Ho Gi Son. Ho's eyes glittered even in the dark. The question was surprising but Kim Hyong Jik realized that it had expressed Ho's complex thoughts. He was more pleased by Ho's spiritual growth as revealed in that question, than by the question itself.

When Kim Hyong Jik had first met Ho Gi Son last year, Ho hadn't known how to do anything about his own destiny; he had been in such a despair that he had wanted to drown himself in the Yolpa-gang River. But today he was deeply and vitally concerned for the future of his country and people, though he expressed himself in simple words. Active for nearly a year as the mainstay of the school guild, as well as of the village community and stone monument guilds, Ho Gi Son, Choe Sok Man, So Chun Bo and other villagers had begun to awake. What was the greatest achievement of the past one year? he thought on the eve of the formation of the organization. It is that I found and trained people from among the working masses, people like Ho Gi Son, who are conscious of the destiny and situation of the country and the people. However, this work has its shortcomings, he thought. For considering the need to rouse the working masses across the nation, the number of people whom my comrades have awakened so far is still small.

With these thoughts, Kim Hyong Jik quietly asked Ho Gi Son:

"When do you think we will win independence, Sun Hui's father?"

Kim Hyong Jik smiled. Ho Gi Son was a bit confused. His eyes blinked for a few moments, staring at Kim Hyong Jik.

"Don't try to be formal. Just tell me what you yourself think." Kim Hyong Jik laughed informally, to put Ho at ease. Then Ho Gi Son gave an embarrassed smile and scratching the back of his head, replied falteringly.

"Such humble people as me have no idea.... But what I think is this."

"Yes?"

"We'll win it soon. In a few years."

"In a few years? Why do you think so?"

"I've no definite reckoning. But, Mr. Kim, we are just pinning our hopes on you."

"On me?"

Kim Hyong Jik gave an inquisitive look on hearing Ho's incoherent answer.

"The idea comes to my mind whenever I see you, sir. Since you came here to our village a year ago, how many people have visited here! There have been so many people here—people who spoke the dialects of Hwanghae Province,

and Kyongsang, Kyonggi and Cholla Provinces—gentlemen, students, workers, peasants like us, erh, various sorts of people. Whenever they came, we talked among ourselves: Many people are working in the independence movement all over the country, receiving your instructions, so it won't be long before the Japs are beaten. When the time comes, Mr. Kim will issue the orders and Jap rule will be overthrown just like that."

"You mean simply by my order?"

"Yes, we believe so."

"Sun Hui's father, if that is so, I'll shout orders right away. Ha, ha, ha...." Laughing quietly Kim Hyong Jik continued. "Now I think it's my turn to give an answer."

Saying this, he started walking on. Ho Gi Son followed, looking trustfully at him.

"In my opinion, if we are to know when independence will be won, we must first know how to win it, mustn't we?"

"Yes...."

Ho Gi Son replied uncertainly.

"If we are to win our independence, we must have a number of conditions. For example, there must be an international development which will be advantageous for us to knock down the Japs. And even if such a chance arrives, the Koreans must have enough force to beat them down. Otherwise no opportunity, however favourable, will be of much use. But this alone is not enough. You can't fight by force alone. In order to bring the time forward, foster our force and channel the struggle in the right direction, there must be correct leadership, for a movement, like a man, needs brains. These are just a few of the essential conditions. Without these, we won't achieve the country's independence. What is most important is to foster our force enough to knock out the Japs and build a new country. Even if the chance arises and we have excellent strategy, we could still do no more than shed tears unless we have our own force."

"Where is that force, sir?" Ho Gi Son asked immediately, unlike his usual self.

Kim Hyong Jik stopped and for a few seconds stared at the branches of a mulberry tree on the road rustling in the wind in the dark. And then he looked over his shoulder at Ho Gi Son and said:

"It's you, Sun Hui's father, who has that force."

"Me?"

Ho Gi Son was quite taken aback. He stared at Kim Hyong Jik, wide-eyed.

"Yes. That force could be provided when millions of working people, like you, who are the mainstay of the nation, come out to fight, realizing, just as you do, that they can only live by smashing the Japs and regaining independence."

Ho Gi Son was speechless quite a while. His face showed a mixture of suspense and emotion, confusion and delight.

"Can humble folks like me have such power?..." Ho Gi Son mumbled.

"They are not humble at all. Our people have provided the whole nation with food and clothes and shed their blood to defend the country from foreign invasion. It is the aristocratic rulers and those engaged in the independence movement in the past who regarded them as humble, that was their greatest crime. That is why the country was ruined and the independence movement suffered one failure after another. As I always say in classes, history tells us that it is the common people, people like you villagers here who have safeguarded our great history for four thousand years."

Kim Hyong Jik walked slowly on, telling him about the lessons of history. Tonight, for the first time in his life, Ho Gi Son keenly realized that the poor ordinary people like himself were the masters of the country, that they were the mainstay, that it was they who must shoulder the destiny of the nation. Now he understood that Kim Hyong Jik had opened the school here in Naedong and had taught children and grown-ups days and nights not simply to open the eyes of the unlettered peasants.

Before they knew, the two men had come to the ground of Myongsin School.

"Well, Sun Hui's father," Kim Hyong Jik stopped and asked him in a calm and serious voice, "How about taking part in the independence movement?"

I don't deserve this trust, Ho Gi Son thought, and he was at a loss how to reply. He hesitated before he spoke.

"Having heard what you have said, I feel keenly that common folk like me must put their shoulder to the wheel. But I have learned so little, I've no knowledge, and what can I do, I wonder.... If you ask me to go on some errands, I'm ready to make every possible effort to do...."

"No one is born an independence worker, don't you see?

And this independence movement has nothing unusual about it. You are already doing a lot for it, Sun Hui's father."

"I am?" Ho Gi Son doubted his ears.

"You are. You are working hard to run the school guild, the village community and stone monument guilds and, what is more, you are helping us to go out on liaison missions and stand on guard for us. I would say you are doing quite a big job. Anybody would give help to the independence movement if he did what he could do with all sincerity."

"But such a trifle work won't...."

"Ho, ho, ho... You are dissatisfied, eh? Would you do slightly bigger job for us, then?"

"What is it?"

Ho Gi Son looked uncertainly at Kim Hyong Jik.

"I mean working among members of the village community and school guilds, imbuing them with patriotism against Japan as I've told you tonight and rallying more members among the peasants in Naedong and neighbouring villages."

Ho Gi Son remained silent, just looking up at the dark clouds fleeting across the sky. Then he turned towards Kim Hyong Jik and added falteringly.

"I'll try my best if you lead me, although I'm not sure if I can manage it."

"Good. Then, Sun Hui's father, let's discuss this again tomorrow night. Together with Mr. Choe Sok Man and Mr. So Chun Bo after evening classes."

"I understand."

"It will soon be daybreak. Please go home in and rest."

"I'm all right. But you must have some sleep, Mr. Kim."

"Yes, I'll go home."

Kim Hyong Jik stood, watching Ho Gi Son disappear into the darkness.

He was now fully convinced that in the final analysis, the country's destiny was carried on the shoulders of those poor yet simple, warm-hearted and sturdy millions of common people, the working masses such as Sun Hui's father, and that the country would be won back only through their efforts. At this very moment something flashed across his mind like a lightning. There was a gleam in his eyes.

"National Association! Yes, the Korean National Association!..."

He said it calmly. It sounded soft and plain. However,

the name seemed to contain the simple and dependable figure of Ho Gi Son who had just passed before him, and the images of millions of people of this country. It was not as high-sounding as "revolution", "liberation", "independence", but it sounded common and dependable like a vast ocean which was capable of bearing and tending all these.

Yes, it must be the Korean National Association! he thought.

He walked towards the classroom, his skirts fluttering.

Having pulled up the flickering lamp wick, he picked up a pencil and sat at the desk. On the margin of a sheet of white paper he jotted down:

The organization shall be called the Korean National Association.

He reread this carefully, still holding the pencil. In view of the doctrine, objectives and rules of action, the name was comprehensive and unambiguous. He gave a sigh of relief.

He began to reread the document he had prepared from the first page. He checked it word by word and polished it, revising a bit here and changing the odd word there.

Kim Hyong Jik laid down his writing brush. Now he had basically finished the doctrine, objectives and rules of action. When he had added supplementary regulations on codes and the meetings of the membership, everything would be ready. He must inform the comrades who were waiting and hold a preliminary meeting to reach agreement; then it would be possible to hold the inauguration meeting. We must form the organization within next month, he thought.

While pondering over all this, Kim Hyong Jik felt his seat warming up. The room which had been chilly now seemed rather warm. He wondered why, and watched the lower part of the room. He heard the occasional crackling of the wood from outside. He looked up at the clock on the wall. It was almost four in the morning.

He got up and went out. As he turned the corner of the building, someone sprang to his feet by the fireplace which gave off a bright light. Kim Hyong Jik stopped. It was his wife. Husband and wife stood speechless, facing each other. There was light in one of the windows of his house. It must

have been on with the light in the window of the classroom. A warmth filled Kim Hyong Jik's heart.

"Oh, it was you." The words were ordinary enough.

"Chol Ju cried and woke me, so...."

Kang Ban Sok said as if to excuse herself. Then turning up her face, she looked at him and continued.

"I'm afraid you are working too hard. You ought to go in and sleep at least a couple of hours."

Her face had a worried look. He smiled.

"I will."

He thought no other answer would give his worried wife pleasure and comfort. There was a look of relief in his wife's eyes.

In his bed Kim Hyong Jik felt a bit tired, but his head was too clear to go to sleep. He thought that in the morning he would send out messengers to the comrades in adjacent areas and dispatch code telegrams to call comrades in different parts of the country and those in Chientao, Peking and Shanghai to a meeting, and then he was asleep before he knew it. But he was awake again an hour later. He went to the main room and quietly shook his son under the quilt.

"Jung Son, my boy, get up."

"Um—"

Jung Son turned on his side and opened his eyes wide. As soon as he saw it was his father, he leapt to his feet.

Jung Son folded his bedding neatly and put it on the chest. Kim Hyong Jik looked fondly at his son, and then fetched a bugle from the wall and handed it to him. Jung Son took the bugle and slung it on his shoulder, smiling happily. There was a dimple on his right cheek.

"Well, let's go."

Kim Hyong Jik led the way out. It was still a bit dark outside. Dawn was approaching the horizon.

He climbed up Mt. Ponghwa-san with his son. The hills and rivers waking up from the morning slumber of the early spring were refreshing and lovely.

From the exercise ground under the huge pine tree father and son looked far into the distance. The mist rising from the surface of the Taedong-gang flowed over the dunes near Maekjon ferry. Beyond the misty plain, range after range of mountains stretched out to the distant horizon under the dawning sky. The dim lavender morning glow started reflecting

on Mt. Adal-san soaring into the sky like a giant commanding the uncounted mountains around its waist.

The green pine grove, where Kim Hyong Jik was, held out all the fresh and green boughs up into the air. The eastern sky began to turn crimson. Kim Hyong Jik and his son admired the awakening of nature.

"Now let's blow the bugle." Kim Hyong Jik turned back and stretched out his hand. He took the bugle from his son without a word. Kim Hyong Jik jumped up on the rock and a clarion call rang round the village.

A few days later Kim Hyong Jik held a preliminary meeting at Hakdang-gol in Pyongyang. At this meeting he proposed that a full-dress meeting be convened to inaugurate an underground anti-Japanese revolutionary organization towards the end of March; he also submitted draft documents of his own make concerning the struggle goal of this organization, the form of structure and activity regulations and a proposal on naming this organization the Korean National Association. All his draft documents and proposals were adopted unanimously.

4

March 23, 1917.

On this historic day it had been warm in the morning; then, in the afternoon, the sky started to sprinkle snow. Towards dusk the snowflakes were as big as cotton flowers.

The white snow fell on the main streets of Ponjong and Taehwajong, lined with two or three-storey buildings, on the surrounding alleys where houses that looked like the backs of crabs stood close together, and on Chongryu-byok Cliff, the Ulmil-dae Pavilion and the Choesung-dae Pavilion which stood grimly on the Taedong-gang River and on the Potong and Sadong Plains. Only the Taedong-gang that had just thawed swallowed up the masses of snowflakes avariciously and flowed vigorously through the city of Pyongyang. The snow fell faster as the night advanced as if determined to bury this river too.

The snow was falling heavily on a tile-roofed house at the bottom of Hakdang-gol where the bright lights from

the outhouse room threw a gentle beam through the window on the snowbound courtyard.

Kim Hyong Jik made arrangements to hold a meeting for the inauguration of the Korean National Association at Hakdang-gol. This place called Hakdang-gol or the Place of Schools offered advantages, because there were many schools in the neighbourhood. Since his Sungsil School days he had used the place as a foothold for his activities. In addition, there were gathered mission schools such as Sungsil School and Sungui Girls' School, on which the Japanese imperialists kept a less watchful eye. For this reason, he still used this place as his major base of activity in the city of Pyongyang, and prepared the historic inauguration meeting of the Korean National Association to be held here.

The room was packed with people now. Kim Hyong Jik sat up against the wall with Pak Yun Hwan, Chon Yong Tae and Commander Won Dong Yu beside a small low table. Around them were Hong Jun Gol, Cho Pil U, Pang In Su, Kim Sok Ha, Yun Sam, Mr. O of Pyongyang, Maeng Gyong Jae of Seoul, Commander Chu Pung, Ho Gi Son and So Chun Bo from Naedong and other familiar faces. There were also delegates in Western clothes from Peking and Shanghai and delegates from Kyongsang, Cholla, Hwanghae, Kyonggi Provinces and other areas, and many others.

Now Pak Yun Hwan was speaking; trying hard to control his emotions, he was doing his best to keep his voice as calm as possible; but his excitement kept getting the better of him and his voice quivered and often broke off.

The same excitement and emotion showed in every eye focussed on the executives—flashing eyes and flushed faces betrayed their beating hearts. Those who last year had taken part in the discussion of the great task here in this very place in the presence of Kim Hyong Jik were deeply moved. Through the efforts of a handful of comrades this last year who had carried out Kim Hyong Jik's intentions, the preliminary meeting had been held last February, and it had been possible to bring the delegates here from across the country and even abroad for this inaugural meeting, which was to leave its great mark on the nation's history.

Kim Hyong Jik was as deeply moved as his comrades and was glancing at the dear comrades-in-arms who had come to this place despite all the trials and hardships of the last year.

"...so you comrades gathered here today are delegates of different strata of the independence movement in many places at home and abroad. In other words, you are delegates to this inaugural meeting reflecting the will of the whole nation, the whole people...."

Pak Yun Hwan was making the opening address.

As they listened, the delegates saw vividly the comrades who had sent them here.

"...I now declare the meeting open," said Pak Yun Hwan.

They were simple words, yet everybody present felt with every fibre of his body a great meaning in this opening, that could not have been expressed in any number of words. This was a meeting where you did not applaud or shout. But burning eyes greeted this historic moment more ardently than any applause.

"Now, then, the first item of agenda: Mr. Kim Hyong Jik will report on the formation of the Korean National Association."

Feverish eyes focussed on Kim Hyong Jik. He was looking down at the table, and seemed to be turning over his thoughts or controlling his excitement. Presently he slowly raised his head. His eyes shone, gentle and clear, looking at the comrades' faces full of trust and expectation. He began quietly.

"Fellow delegates, a year ago some of us gathered here to discuss the turbulent development of the situation at home and abroad and consulted on how to shore up the declining independence movement. And I am profoundly moved to see so many representatives from different areas and from abroad gathered here to discuss founding a national organization. The credit for this belongs to you delegates for your devoted work in the face of all hardships."

Kim Hyong Jik stopped and gave a slight bow towards the comrades.

"To put things in a nutshell we have laid the groundwork for a national organization and our plan is well matured. Or maybe I would better say that it has now become a matter of pressing urgency. Why? First of all, let us discuss the developments of the internal and external situation."

He thought for a while and continued.

"As the days go by, it becomes still clearer that our estimate of the situation has been correct. In this War the

whole world has been plunged into the greatest blood bath we have ever witnessed. What is cause of this war, and what will happen?..."

He then made a clear-cut analysis of why the war had broken out, of the conflicts between Great Britain and Germany and between the other powers involved: Germany, the less developed power had begun to expand rapidly and saw Great Britain with her many colonies as a thorn in her flesh, whereas Great Britain was alarmed at Germany's rapid expansion; he also touched upon the complicated relationships between big and small nations involved in the war.

Then he went on to say.

"Look at them fighting, like a pack of hungry wolves who want to fill their stomachs. Their differing interests divided them into two groups; one the Entente, Great Britain, Russia, France, the other, the Central Powers, Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire, with various other nations lined up with one side or the other according to their various interests. In June three years ago a Serbian youth shot the Austrian crown prince and princess at the capital of Bosnia in Austria. Taking advantage of this the two packs of beasts launched into a war of genocide which was without precedent in history. But in the course of the war, our attention has been focussed on Japan and America, both thousands of miles from Europe, where the war is going on. But when the war broke out, under the pretext of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Japan declared war on Germany thousands of miles away, sent troops to occupy the Chinese peninsula of Shantung immediately. Japan has also taken advantage of the war to mass-produce lethal weapons to make vast fortunes selling them to European states on both sides. It is reported that in three years Japan has multiplied its capital ten-fold. And while the European powers are fighting a bloody battle, the Japs are gradually chasing them out and extending their own grip on the whole of Asia. And what about America? They too are profiting from the war. They have stayed out and declared neutrality, but like the Japs, are manufacturing and selling enormous quantities of arms. They're fanning the flames of war and making blood money. The Japs and Americans are even more atrocious and brazen than the wrangling beasts. And now that there are signs of the war ending fairly soon in victory for the Entente, they're taking sides with the Entente, the 'just' side and seem

inclined to join it.

"This shows their craftiness, their shameless design to get a big helping in the share-out of colonies and concessions in the final carve-up when the Entente have won.

"That gives you a rough picture of the whys and wherefores of the war. The question is what conclusion we might draw from it."

He paused and then went on:

"It is this: the true war aims are stealing colonies, enslaving other nations, world supremacy. Unless the great powers change their vulpine nature, their rivalry which has even now driven all humanity into a sea of blood, will continue. So it is obvious that even if the war ends soon, any agreements among the great powers must soon be broken as new rivalries develop. Who will be next to jump up on the stage?"

Kim Hyong Jik glanced inquiringly around at his comrades. Every delegate's expression was strained.

"This terrible war has worn out both the Central Powers and the Entente. The only nations that have shed no blood but have made fortunes and gained power are America and Japan. So when the war is over, it is these two who will compete for domination in Asia. Since during the war Japan has gone all out for supremacy in Asia and her seas, the competition between the two powers is likely to open on East Asian stage. Ambitious European powers who have Asian colonies and concessions will soon be at odds with Japan. This is an easy conclusion. America and the European powers have already begun to express alarm over Japan's increasing influence. So it is as clear as day that the termination of the war will bring a new spate of rivalries between Japan and the Western powers. In other words, as we foresaw a year ago, that golden opportunity to regain our sovereignty in our lifetime, the golden opportunity when Japan and the Western powers are struggling for supremacy is in sight.

"Fellow delegates, these fast-changing trend in the situation urgently demands that we the Korean independence workers make sure that the Korean people foster their strength to overthrow Japanese rule and reclaim sovereignty by their own efforts, taking the opportunity that is to come. So it is vital that we form our organization, as the backbone of the independence movement. This is the main reason why we are here today."

The delegates' faces brightened, they heaved great sighs, and many nodded again and again.

Kim Hyong Jik went on to say:

"Now, the second reason: We have laid the groundwork for a national organization.

"Many comrades and masses of people in Pyongan, Hwanghae, Kyonggi, Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces and other important areas at home have supported our far-reaching plan and the independence fighters in North Chientao, Peking, Shanghai and other places abroad have resolved to share life and death with us...."

He outlined the situation of both the secret and legal mass organizations in various parts of the country and said. "Since you are well aware of all this, I won't go into it at length, though it is the most vital of all factors. However ripe the situation, if you had not used all your strength to rally comrades among the masses, even at the risk of your lives, we would not be now able to form a national organization. And, let me tell you another reason for our endeavour to form the organization."

Kim Hyong Jik thought for a few moments before he went on:

"It is this. There are people in the independence movement at home and abroad—and this is a growing trend—who advocate relying on the strength of the 'great nations'. President Wilson's honeyed words of 'sympathy' and 'support' for our cause especially have increased the absurd illusions of these people who want to rely on outside help. They have begun to look on America as on 'saviour'. I won't go on about this because we all know how preposterous this illusion is.

"And yet, we should not just dismiss them with a laugh. The revolutionary movement is having a tough time under the armed Jap repression, and the US President's sweet opiates may charm some people and paralyze the independence movement. So founding a national organization is urgent, too, to save the Korean independence movement from these advocates of outside help. These are the main reasons for our organization.

"Now I would like to talk about the sort of organization we are going to form, about doctrine, goals and rules of action."

The delegates' faces were flushed. Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"First I'd like to propose that we call it the Korean National Association. This means it is the whole nation's organization, a genuine independence movement of all strata of Koreans—workers, peasants and the rest of the working masses, intellectuals, youth and students, businessmen and craftsmen—all who want to overthrow the Jap marauders and regain our sovereignty can join, an organization in which all can fight together, in unity. In this, our organization is fundamentally different from all its forerunners. This will be the source of its great might in the future, will make it the backbone of the independence movement."

He underlined the nature of the Korean National Association, the necessity and the importance of a nationwide body rooted deep among the working people, pointing out the lessons to be learnt from the older independence organizations.

Then he went on to the aims of the KNA. In short, it was to achieve the country's independence and build a truly civilized nation through the united efforts of Koreans. The present task was to gain more comrades and masses, to build up the KNA.

Having clarified the nature, struggle aims and doctrine of the KNA. Kim Hyong Jik explained the forms of structure, rules of action and revolutionary means to translate the KNA's goal. He made the following points:

The KNA would keep in touch with patriotic organizations at home and abroad, sending out organizers and expanding its forces, and would assign a district head to each area, convening a meeting in Pyongyang each spring.

Strict secrecy was needed to protect the organizations from Japanese repression—the comrades must always use codes. The code words for KNA were "Business", "Agriculture", or "Commerce" for example, the comrades' ideological position, "Barometer" and meeting, "Banquet".

There should be fund-raising efforts; weapons would be needed and the best people should be picked out from among the membership for military training.

The members would be made to endeavour to go out among the masses and inspire them with patriotism and against Japan.

As regards selecting members, care was needed to admit only those pledged to fight devotedly to free their homeland.

Strong revolutionary discipline was needed; unity of ideo-

logy and purpose and cohesion among the comrades should be treasured as the apple of the eye and the members must not vacillate ideologically or stray from the organization.

"Fellow delegates, that is the rough outline of the organization we are founding. It is not easy to run an organization on so big a scale, and I know our struggle will be long and grim. However, I believe that only with such an organization can we achieve Korea's independence, though the road will be hard, with many trials. Now I ask you for your frank views on these, my incomplete proposals."

He concluded as calmly as he had begun. There was a silence in the room. Not a stir among the people, who were imprinting Kim Hyong Jik's profound plan on their minds.

After a while Pak Yun Hwan, who was presiding at the meeting, said, "Now, please express your views," and looked around at the delegates.

"Surely there can be no different views. Having heard what Mr. Kim Hyong Jik said, I can see clearly what our Korean National Association will be like," said Won Dong Yu, his roundish dignified face bright with emotion.

"Let us approve of the formation of the Korean National Association as suggested by Mr. Kim," proposed Yun Sam, delegate from Kyongsang Province, his flushed sensitive face looked round, obviously seeking the colleagues' agreement.

"I agree."

"It's a good idea."

Various delegates spoke in agreement.

"Fellow delegates, let me say a few words," said Kim Hyong Jik, glancing at the animated comrades.

"I'm grateful to you for your agreement with my proposal. However, it should not be approved without very thorough discussion. Every word and phrase of KNA doctrine, aims and rules could be decisive to the destiny of the Korean independence movement, so I think we need a detailed discussion, to decide what is right or wrong."

Everyone in the room became quiet, sunk in thought.

The first to speak was Pak Yun Hwan from Unryul. His speech was systematic. He reminded that Kim Hyong Jik had taken full account of the historical lessons of the former independence movement, and he agreed that the KNA must strike its roots deep among the masses, especially among the

working people, illustrating from the situation in Hwanghae Province.

The next speaker was Won Dong Yu from Linkiang. He spoke about the apalling situation of the Independence Army and the independence organizations in the Chientao areas; they were scattered and fighting among themselves, unable to find the right orientation for the independence movement. And he expressed his conviction that the emergence of the KNA with the clear-cut and far-reaching new policy proposed by Kim Hyong Jik would shed a light on the whole independence movement in Chientao, which was now in complete confusion. After Yun Sam of Kyongsang Province and Maeng Gyong Jae of Seoul the floor was taken by Ho Gi Son from Naedong. His speech was a bit different from those made at formal meetings. He spoke about how Kim Hyong Jik had built up Myongsin School and the evening school at Naedong, how he had formed the school guild, village community and stone monument guilds and how he had awakened Ho Gi Son himself and Chun Bo, Sok Man and other peasants, when they won the first round in battle against the landlord. The audience was deeply moved.

Finally a delegate from Peking, who represented the independence fighters abroad spoke about the situation of the movement in foreign countries and the importance of founding the KNA.

Then Kim Hyong Jik rose to wind up the debate.

"Now I would like to put the proposal to the vote. Will those in favour of forming the Korean National Association, please raise their hands."

His voice shook a little; he appeared to be trying to control his excitement. The people raised their hands slowly and firmly, as if lifting up their bodies and their souls. It had stopped snowing outside now but a fierce wind was blowing, whipping up snow against the door of the room. The storm howled past the roof of the house, roaring like a symbol of the revolutionary storm that the new Korean National Association would bring into this land or the tough road that awaited the KNA. They kept their hands up for a long time.

The next item of the agenda was electing officers. Kim Hyong Jik, Pak Yun Hwan and Maeng Gyong Jae were elected members of the leadership, which was followed by the election of district heads and correspondents.

Pak Yun Hwan was elected district head of Hwanghae Province; Maeng Gyong Jae head for Kyonggi; Yun Sam head for Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces; Chon Yong Tae correspondent for Chientao; and Kim Sok Ha correspondent for Antung.

The two comrades from Peking and Shanghai were elected correspondents for their respective districts. The district of Pyongan Province was put in Kim Hyong Jik's charge, and he would also work as a member of the leadership.

Then the meeting considered and approved of the people recommended by each district as eligible for membership. From the Naedong village, Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Chong Jin Gu and Choe Sok Man were registered as members.

Lastly, Kim Hyong Jik assigned each of the comrades present at the meeting to specific tasks to be carried out for the present.

Having spoken out Kim Hyong Jik was silent for a while, straightening himself and looking round at the comrades. All eyes were focussed on him.

"Fellow delegates, the Korean National Association has hereby been formed. Let us always remember this night, March 23, 1917." Kim Hyong Jik spoke excitedly. They were all excited, everyone held hand of the comrades sitting next to them, their shoulders heaving. They wanted to cheer at the top of their voices, jerking up their arms. Commander Chu Pung dropped his head, wiping his moist eyes with the back of his clenched fist. Many eyes were filled with tears. Soothing his surging heart Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"Having achieved the first thing, we are all filled with hope. However, we have a grim struggle before us, and emotion alone will not carry us through. So I would like to make the following proposal."

He picked up a rolled sheet of white paper that had lain beside him and spread it on the table. It was a blank oblong paper. The comrades looked quizzically at the paper and Kim Hyong Jik.

He continued.

"That is to imprint our resolves on this paper. I propose that we each of us pledge in blood that we will not betray our fellow countrymen or our organization in any adversity, that we will stick to our principles and be true to our revolutionary cause of national restoration to our very last breath."

His calm voice sounded solemn. A grim determination shone

in his eye as he looked round at every comrade. He saw no hesitation and read firm resolve in the eyes of the comrades who stared back with pursed lips.

"Good. Let me write first," said Pak Yun Hwan as he moved over to the table. He gazed for a few seconds at the white paper with a strained look. The snowstorm roared more furiously. He brought his right hand up to his mouth. Blood gushed out of his fourth finger which moved forcefully across the paper. The comrades looked on with abated breath.

PATRIOTIC DEVOTION

The characters seemed to be dancing on the paper.

As he withdrew, Won Dong Yu sat at the table. He was thoughtful for a while before he too bit the tip of his finger. Then he put his bleeding finger tip on the paper, quickly dashed off *DO OR DIE*. After him Chon Yong Tae wrote down *SINCERE HEART* in a square hand, Maeng Gyong Jae *EVERLASTING LOYALTY* and Commander Chu Pung *BLOOD ALLIANCE*.

They were followed by Pang In Su, Yun Sam, Ho Gi Son, Cho Pil U and the others.

Hong Jun Gol was the last to write; he had been too excited to be able to decide what he would write. He had hesitated. While his comrades were writing, he had thought of dozens of phrases but had not found one that would express his heroic yet grim resolve. Now he had to face the paper. But he could not write all the words he had thought of. His hesitant eyes happened to rest on the characters written by Pak Yun Hwan. Finally he realized that these plain and simple characters contained his heroic resolve. He bit the tip of his thick, rough fourth finger. The blood spurted out. He wrote *PATRIOTIC DEVOTION* in a big hand.

Lastly Kim Hyong Jik wrote *KOREAN INDEPENDENCE* with a forceful stroke.

Everyone looked over at the paper with a thousand emotions.

"Fellow delegates," called Kim Hyong Jik quietly and raised up his head, his voice suddenly shaking. He looked round at his comrades with unbounded delight. But for the first time they saw his eyes filled with tears.

"Let us always remember our pledge in blood."

Nobody replied, for nobody could find words. The tears glistened in their eyes too.

The snowstorm hit the door, but a warm air filled the

room, where it felt as if a hot wind was blowing.

Everybody left that night, except Kim Sok Ha, Pak Yun Hwan, Maeng Gyong Jae and a few others who would be going by train.

At dawn Kim Hyong Jik crossed the Rimwon bridge, accompanying Won Dong Yu and Chon Yong Tae. They were followed by Chu Pung and Hong Jun Gol.

On the way Kim Hyong Jik was told by Commander Won Dong Yu about the difficult situation and the complications of the Independence Army units in west Chientao. He walked on without a word in a brooding mood, looking up at the lightning sky. Before long they reached the fork in the road. Kim Hyong Jik stopped and the others followed suit.

"All right. Then I'll visit your place soon," said Kim Hyong Jik, turning round to look at Commander Won Dong Yu.

"Thank you, sir. Then, when will you...."

Won Dong Yu was very pleased because his request for Kim Hyong Jik's visit to his place had been accepted so readily.

"I'll probably leave next month."

"I'm very sorry that you have to come over on top of your heavy work here, because we have failed to work as we should." Won Dong Yu's look showed a deep sorrow.

"Never mind. If I could set things right there, then.... But do you know the name of the staff officer who is said to have a firm grip on Cha Go Ryun's unit?"

As Kim Hyong Jik asked this, Chon Yong Tae who was behind him stepped forward and replied, "Pyo Bom Su."

"Pyo Bom Su? Have you checked up on his background?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, looking at Chon Yong Tae.

"We tried to get some information, but we couldn't find out many details. He is said to claim that in the last years of Korean rule he was officer of the Royal Bodyguard in Seoul, that as soon as the "Chongmi Seven-point Treaty" was signed, he came over to the Righteous Volunteer forces. Then he was captured by the Japs and imprisoned for a few years, and when he broke out of the prison he crossed the Amnok-gang River."

As Chon Yong Tae finished his reply, Kim Hyong Jik thought for some moments and said.

"I understand. To my mind, the troubles with Cha Go Ryun's unit have been caused by this staff officer Pyo Bom Su as well as by the commander. When you return I'd like you to try to get more information about this man. I, too, will inquire into his background before I leave."

"All right, sir."

Won Dong Yu and Chon Yong Tae bade farewell and set out on their way.

With Hong Jun Gol and Chu Pung, Kim Hyong Jik trod along the highroad that led to the river bank walking against the blizzard.

5

Kim Hyong Jik left Naedong on a clear early spring day.

Kim Hyong Jik visited his comrades in the northern areas of South Pyongan Province for nearly ten days and acquainted himself with the local situation to help them take measures for building up and expanding the KNA organizations. On the appointed date he met Hong Jun Gol in Kaechon. On his leader's instructions, Hong had visited Seoul and Chungchong Province and collected information on Pyo Bom Su, the staff officer in Cha Go Ryun's unit.

It was true that Pyo had been with the Righteous Volunteers in the province of Chungchong, but after the "annexation" he had changed coats and embezzled 5,000 *won* donated by patriots, and had been arrested by the Japanese military police, while trying to cross the Amnok-gang. He had been thrown into Sinuiju prison, but no one knew how he had got out and joined the Independence Army.

To give guidance to the organizations along the border areas on the Amnok-gang, Kim Hyong Jik left, feeling there was something shady about Pyo.

On the fourth day of his journey Kim Hyong Jik crossed a pass more than 1,000 metres above sea level.

From here a no man's land stretched for some 130 *ri*. He walked into a deep valley flanked by rugged mountains. It was still winter here, and the snow was deep. The snow over

the wet marshland had melted around noon and had frozen again, so that it seemed as if a huge river was flowing.

The traveller who passed this part of the country in winter must wear *sagal* (spiked wooden shoes—*Tr.*), for if he wore bast sandals and socks, his footwear would soon be soaking wet and his feet frozen. Kim Hyong Jik and Hong Jun Gol had bought *sagal* at Nyongwon where they had spent a night. Some horse-shoe-shaped spiked metal pieces were attached to the soles. The spikes on *sagal* cut into the ice so that the wearer does not slip, and his feet stay dry. But they are heavy and they slow you down.

The mountains in both sides were thick with trees, most of them were *punbi*, spruces and larches.

On the fifth day, Kim Hyong Jik arrived at a village and spent the night. The day before he had slept in a lone hovel in the no man's land, but now he was going to sleep at a hamlet in this area. All the houses here were oblong cabins usually with three or four rooms.

That day at dusk Hong Jun Gol went to a house and knocked at the kitchen door, saying, "We are wayfarers. Would you kindly let us come in for a short rest?"

"Come in." It was the voice of a middle-aged woman.

Kim Hyong Jik opened the kitchen door and entered, followed by Hong Jun Gol.

"You are from the western province?"

"Yes-s, we are from Pyongan Province," replied Hong Jun Gol. "Come in quick." The mistress offered the travellers seats in the boarded part of the kitchen. There was a pile of black charcoal in the hearth beside the kitchen door. The mistress seated her guests and went down to the earthen part of the kitchen floor. Judging from her lined hemp jacket, her family seemed not too badly off, though she was barefoot. She fumbled in a net bag over the cowshed, and took out a few potatoes, which were as big as wooden pillows. She brought the potatoes to the hearth, blew at the charcoal a couple of times and buried them in it. Then she stepped up on the boarded part of the floor and put out crunched tobacco leaves and a piece of paper from inside her belt and offered the guests to smoke.

"Smoke?"

Kim Hyong Jik politely refused, with a wave of his hand.

"Thank you, I don't smoke."

Hong Jun Gol refused also.

"You really don't smoke?"

"No."

The guests having refused, the mistress lit a home-rolled cigarette with an ember from the hearth and drew on it.

Kim Hyong Jik was interested in the simple manners and customs of the population in this part of the country, but his heart was sore at their abject poverty.

"Is your husband out?"

"He went hunting in the mountains."

"What does he hunt?"

"Bears."

"Oh, bears?" Before Kim Hyong Jik finished, the mistress asked him.

"Gentleman from the western province, can you read story books?"

"Story books?"

"If you can, do look at these."

The mistress handed two volumes of old novels copied by writing brush. One was the *Tale of Chon U Chi* and the other the *Tale of Ryu Chung Ryol.*

Kim Hyong Jik opened the *Tale of Chon U Chi* and started reading the beginning.

"Once upon a time in the Sungin-mun Gate at the Pine Capital (the present city of Kaesong) there lived a scholar whose name was Chon U Chi. In his early youth, he studied Taoist magic under a wise teacher. Being clever and diligent he eventually mastered the secret principles. But the country was in such disorder that he did not reveal his talents and lived a secluded life, so that even his closest friends did not know of his skill...."

Well versed in the western ballads, Kim Hyong Jik started reading in an ordinary way but whenever he came to the exciting parts he would take up the western tunes. Hearing some lines the mistress said delighted.

"You read very well. Will you read it for us again in the evening?"

The mistress picked up a wooden tray and went to the hearth. She poked at the fire with a pair of tongs and brought out the potatoes. They were roasted black. She picked them up one by one and dusted off the ash, and then put them on the

tray. She placed it in front of Kim Hyong Jik and invited him to eat.

"Please help yourself."

He thanked her and picked up a potato. So did Hong Jun Gol. It tasted sweeter than those grown in the plains; it was delicious.

Towards dusk the master of the house came home. His wife asked him what he had caught, and he replied "nothing".

"Not even a rabbit? Listen, we have a man from the western province. He reads the story book very well," the mistress told her husband, while she was preparing supper with her daughter-in-law in the kitchen.

No sooner had he heard this, than the master of the house came up on the boarded part of the floor of the kitchen and introduced himself to the guests, delighted. He too was in lined coarse hemp clothes, his footwear looked like a long pair of socks that was made of the hide of a wild animal.

When it became dark in the room the mistress lit the light. In a corner of the back wall there was a niche, above which was a small hole for the smoke to go out through it when the light was on. They used two kinds of lights. When they had to light up the whole room, they used pine resin, but usually they used dry peeled hemp stalks. The stalks were painted with yellow oil and stood in a pyramid. You lit the top and they burnt downwards. The light the mistress put on now was dim.

Then the mistress picked up a long adze, and went to the cowshed, took the lid off a wooden jar, a dugout log, and gouged out a clump of frozen pickled mustards.

As Kim Hyong Jik found out later, in this part of the country it was so cold that neither radishes nor cabbage would grow, and the inhabitants only planted mustard for pickling. They picked and washed and salted the mustard in early autumn, put them in the bottom of the wooden jar and spread crude salt over them; then another layer of mustard again covered in salt, repeating the same process until the jar was full. Then it was covered with a lid, and it froze hard in winter.

The mistress was pulling off pickled mustard with the adze to give to her guests for dinner. The mustard were hooked up out of the clumps of ice in the jar, put into water until the ice melted to leave only the plants. It was very salty and as

bitter as the ox's gall and you could not eat it unless it was washed again and again to take the salt out. That was what the mistress was doing.

Presently dinner was served. The rice and soup bowls and pickle saucers were all cut out of wooden logs. The tiny sauce bowl was the only china on the table.

Oats were regarded as a delicacy in this area, so distinguished guests were served cooked oats with pickled mustard. Though the mistress did not know what sort of people the travellers were, she took a liking to them because they looked refined and, moreover, could read the story book so wonderfully well.

Kim Hyong Jik was interested in the life of the people in these parts—he was seeing it for the first time. He was curious, first of all, about their dialect, habits, clothes and houses and even their food, which were quite different from people living on the plains. Though they lived in a homely way you could see their simplicity and honesty. Everybody worked here; they lived on what the mountains could provide for them. Men farmed, fetched firewood and hunted. Women took care of the household and planted hemp to weave cloth. The hemp in the high plateau was of poor quality and you could not weave more than 15 counts, but just seven or eight counts. They made yarn out of the waste hemp to weave coarse cloth. They sold the high count hemp for cash and made their own clothes for all seasons out of rough hemp.

Comparatively well-off families made lined hemp clothes, but the poorer families could only afford unlined clothes, wearing the same clothes all the year round. Even in weather as cold as this they wore unlined coarse hemp clothes, which did little more than cover their skins. But, poor though they were, they trusted and supported each other and relied on each other; they got together like a pleasant family, leading frugal yet tenacious lives.

There was good reason why the people in this area enjoyed the story books. Hemmed in by the towering mountains on both sides they saw the sun for only a short span even in summer. And in winter, when the days were short, the sun shone over this place just two or three hours a day, and the nights were very long. What could they do in all these long, long nights, cut off from the outside world? They only heard the chirping of birds, the sound of the wind and streams,

saw only mountains, trees, sky and clouds. What else was there to interest them than story books here in this desolate place?

So in winter they found their pleasure in reading or listening to the story books at night. However, all too few of them could read—they were nearly all illiterate. In this remote mountain village there was no community or private school, so you could not get any schooling, however you might yearn for it. If they had been well-off they could have gone to a big city for education, but they were not.

Kim Hyong Jik was making himself comfortable with Hong Jun Gol after they had enjoyed their dinner. Suddenly from outside came a hum of voices and the sound of the feet knocking off the snow, before the master of the house and visitors entered.

"I had dinner at a house in the back valley. Clear the table quick. Many visitors are coming." The husband told the wife. "Then let's go and have our dinner quickly in the back room," said the mistress to her daughter-in-law. They carried the table out through the back door of the kitchen.

The visitors made a deep bow in turn to Kim Hyong Jik. They included old and middle-aged men, old women and housewives. There were also several young girls who looked 15 or 16, a newly married woman and her very young looking husband and a few young, unmarried men. All the men were long-haired.

"Gentleman from the western province, could you read a story book? Say, what have you in your house?"

"I have the *Tale of Chon U Chi* and the *Tale of Ryu Chung Ryol.*" The master of the house answered the old man who had a topknot of what remained of his thin hair on the back of his head and above the ears. Hong Jun Gol was confused and glanced at Kim Hyong Jik. Kim Hyong Jik did not worry, and smiled at the villagers, saying, "If you have come here to hear a story book I'll try to read it, though I'm not a good reader. How about the *Tale of Chon U Chi*?" He asked the audience.

"Better read the *Tale of Chon U Chi.* He is as talented as Hong Gil Dong, you know." The old man with the topknot said cheerily, showing his toothless gums.

"Good!" A voice agreed.

"The light is not bright enough for our guest to read. Light up the pine resin."

"Yes. Put the pine-resin light on, if you have any. I'll give you as much again tomorrow."

The mistress put a pine-resin light in the niche. Kim Hyong Jik sat close to the light and opened the book.

"In those days many villages on the south coast were pillaged by pirates every year. To make things worse, there was a very bad crop, and the people in this part of the country found themselves in a wretched plight.

"However, the nobles who held government posts receiving salaries from the state were only after power and pretended not to know of the people's troubles and this enraged patriotic-minded people. Unable to suppress his wrath Chon U Chi rose up with clenched fists. One morning Chon U Chi left home with a great aim. He regarded heaven and earth as his home and poor folks as his friends, appearing in the east and in the west like a lightning. At times he turned himself into a celestial man or an emperor; riding on a cloud through mists, he flew into the sky or dived into the ground. Indeed, nobody in the world could match him for supernatural speed...."

Kim Hyong Jik did not read exactly what was written in the book. He cut out repetitions and redundancies and changed the fastidious Chinese words into plain Korean. And yet, he read eloquently and fluently. When it came to the hardship of the common folks he read in slightly doleful tones, but when it came to the scenes where the hero ridiculed the king and punished corrupt officials with dexterous tricks, he raised his voice, as if singing some west Korean ballads and all the listeners were enthralled.

There were 50 to 60 people in the two rooms and even in the kitchen, but they were quiet, you could not hear the sound of their breath even, they listened so attentively. Only Kim Hyong Jik's voice reading the book rang clearly across the rooms. Hong Jun Gol too was fascinated to see this new aspect of Kim Hyong Jik's personality; he was moved beyond measure to see how easily he mixed with the masses.

The night had far advanced when Kim Hyong Jik was half way through the book.

"Better stop reading and rest. Your throat must be getting sore!"

"Yes, do take a rest."

When Kim Hyong Jik stopped reading, the women went down into the kitchen. They started preparing potato powder

noodles for supper; they seemed to have been asked to do so.

"Gentleman from the western province, you do not smoke, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"What a pity. What can we offer you? We have nothing to give you in this mountain village." The old man with a topknot was sorry to say this.

"Don't worry about that.... I would like to ask you a question. Are you interested in this story book?" Kim Hyong Jik looked round.

"Of course we are. Particularly because you, gentleman from the western province, read so well." A middle-aged man replied.

"But this book does not arouse any fresh interest in you because you have been hearing it for years. Both the *Tale of Chon U Chi* and the *Tale of Hong Gil Dong* tell about the heroes suddenly appearing and disappearing to come to the aid of poor folks, but, in fact, these stories are just like dreams. However deliciously you eat all sorts of dainties in your dreams, it just fizzles out once you are awake, doesn't it? Don't you think so?"

"You are right." A young man said.

"The old story books are like dreams, so having heard them out, you can get little. How would you like to hear a story about the world we live in, a story that is helpful to us right now?" suggested Kim Hyong Jik.

"Is there such a story?" asked a husky elderly man with a pockmarked face, staring at Kim Hyong Jik.

"There is. Shall I tell you a modern story then?"

"Please do." An old woman urged, watching Kim Hyong Jik; she was gripped with curiosity.

"Then I'll tell you about an uprising that took place several years ago at Sunchon near Pyongyang."

Beginning with this, Kim Hyong Jik started dwelling on the case of the "One-O-One" tax. It had happened a few years after the "annexation". There was a Japanese named Nozawa, an official at the tax office in Sunchon. Every market day this fellow would swagger about the market place at Sunchon and whatever was sold he imposed a "One-O-One" tax on the seller, which was without precedent. This tax was levied on anybody who sold a few eggs or a bundle of firewood, so that the people's grievances filled that whole area.

Kim Hyong Jik said that the Koreans could hardly live on because having lost their country, they had been enslaved wrongfully by the Japs and now they even had to pay these onerous taxes.

One market day, Kim Hyong Jik went on, Nozawa struck a comb vendor from Cholla Province who hadn't been able to sell a thing on the head with his walking cane and broke his horse-hair hat for failing to pay the tax. Seeing the scene, the merchants shouted, "The Jap is beating a Korean!" and gave the Jap a pelting rain of kicks and blows. As he fled, they stoned at him, until he was dead. A huge heap of stones piled up on the body of the dead Jap, as a token of punishment.

"Why, could that be true?"

"It cannot but be true. That sort of thing has happened quite often. We too were robbed by the landlords and the nobles... and by the Japs, so that we had to leave the Ryongnam-bol Plain and come to settle at this place, you see."

One villager after another commented.

"Then what happened, sir?"

"It goes without saying that many people were taken to the military police headquarters and to the police station at Pyongyang where they had quite a hard time, being beaten and having to pay fines. But after that incident, the "One-O-One" tax was abolished. The market taxes were not abolished altogether, but, at any rate, the "One-O-One" tax was. So the people's struggle was a success, wasn't it?"

"It was... but they are so strong that we Koreans with bare hands cannot do anything about them," lamented the old man with a topknot.

"Even bare hands are powerful if they are united. We have no guns, but surely we have sickles, axes, sticks and poles. The merchants of Sunchon killed that vicious Jap with stones."

When Kim Hyong Jik said this, the oldest woman with a deeply furrowed face commented:

"Our guest from the western province is right. Wasn't the Imjin Patriotic War an example? At that time, too, we folks formed volunteers and fought the Japs and won the war seven years later."

"What the mother of the Kapsan House said is right.... You saw the volunteers too?" A girl with a round whitish face asked.

"Why not?" The white haired old woman glanced proudly round and added. "Guest from the western province, listen to me. When I was in Kapsan... I think they called them Hong Bom Do's Volunteers. They were very strong, all of them. One day at dawn there was a big noise and I ran out of the house to find one of the Volunteers grab and hold up the governer of the county over his head with one hand!"

"Ha, ha, ha,..."

Everybody in the rooms burst out laughing.

"Surely you are telling us a lie, isn't that so, mother of the Kapsan House?" The girl with black eyes asked, cupping her chin in her hand.

"What a lass you are! I saw it with my own eyes. The man even made a speech saying that we common folks must rise as soon as possible and drive out the Japs. The guest from the western province is right. If we all of us rise, how could the Japs hold on.... Am I right, guest?"

The old woman stared at Kim Hyong Jik.

"You are right, grandmother. We Koreans aren't quite such fools as the Japs say...."

Citing interesting historical facts, Kim Hyong Jik proved that once the Koreans fought as one man, they could throw out the Japs. The whole audience seemed almost drunk with his story.

While Kim Hyong Jik was telling his story the women of the house and female visitors were busy cooking supper. They made the potato flour noodles—they had made the dough beforehand and it had boiled, been taken out quickly and kneaded till it was ready. Now they forced it through the shaper sieve, the noodles coming out into the cold water to cool. Then they served the noodles, putting a liberal portion in each bowl spiced with chopped pickled mustard.

Kim Hyong Jik ate the refreshing noodles with the villagers.

Next day as Kim Hyong Jik was preparing to leave, men in the neighbourhood held him back, suggesting he should stay another day to see a bear-hunt. He had intended to go on because of the heavy tasks awaiting him, but he agreed to stay because they felt so sorry and also he thought that as he would have to trek along a rough road for days, it might be not bad to rest another day and go hunting with

them. They were delighted when Kim Hyong Jik agreed to go hunting with them.

Kim Hyong Jik was surprised to hear that the elderly man with a pockmarked face was to direct the hunt. But his body was tough and he seemed to have a lot of experience at hunting.

They said a bear-hunt was the most exciting hunting of all. This aroused Kim Hyong Jik's curiosity. The party consisted of a dozen or so men, including the head. Each of them carried a pair of skis on his shoulder, made of fired oak boards. And each had sticks, and the spearmen also had long spears under their arms.

Kim Hyong Jik and Hong Jun Gol borrowed snowshoes from them.

In this area snow starts falling in September and does not melt again until the spring thaw. In the winter storms the snow on the mountains drifts hither and thither and in some places the snow drifts are several fathoms deep. And should you stray and fall into the snow you would die there.

Kim Hyong Jik was wearing a pair of snowshoes and he carried a stick, so did Hong Jun Gol. Hong too was seeing a bear-hunt for the first time. He did not know how to ski. The leading hunter led the party up the mountain. It was not very steep, but it seemed more than 15 *ri* to the top, crawling over the massive ridges.

The ravine along the mountain and the slopes were dense with large trees such as *punbi* and larches. The trees also stood right on the ridges, though sparcely and pieces of logs lay in between. When the party had covered some ten *ri*, the leading hunter with a pockmarked face came to a sudden halt and studied the terrain around. They were not far from the summit. A wide prospect unfolded before their eyes. Range after range of mountains stretched into the distance, like the waves of a vast ocean, all covered in snow. The sky was blue and high above the mountains and the shafts of the morning sun were so dazzling. The view was indeed majestic. It was a clear and windless day. Kim Hyong Jik had his fur cap pulled over his eyes, but he felt a prickling sensation in his nostrils from the intense cold. Yet, it was rather refreshing. Hong Jun Gol was worried lest Kim Hyong Jik's feet should freeze.

Having examined the terrain the leading hunter took

something like a whistle out of his bosom and blew "thunder". On hearing this "thunder", they said, all the animals crawled out of their lair—bear, wild boar, roe deer, badger, deer. Then a head hunter spotted the biggest beast and drove the chasers and spearmen towards it. That day their target was bear.

As the old man whistled the "thunder" for a while, wild animals were seen, even from afar, leaping out of the ravines. But the mountains were so thickly wooded that they quickly disappeared into bushes. You could not see the beasts unless you had superb eyesight.

The leading hunter stopped whistling and pointed with his raised hand, shouting orders, like an army commander.

"There comes a bear. First spearman, forward! Second spearmen and club-men, follow them!"

The spearmen who had been waiting at a distance, on their skis, shot down simultaneously like a lightning towards where the bear had appeared. The spearmen were followed by the chasers who cut off the bear so that he could not escape sideways into the ravines.

They skied fantastically fast on new snow between bushes and here and there big trees. But the skiers, spears and sticks under their arms, darted down like arrows, threading their way dexterously through the trees and jumping over the fallen logs. Their skill was astonishing. The tiniest misjudgement of the eye could have sent them, any moment, head first into a huge tree trunk. But they kept threading through the trees and bushes.

"Let's go on and watch, sir." The leading hunter suggested.

"Go ahead, please. We'll follow."

In the wake of the leading hunter, Kim Hyong Jik went down to the ridge with Hong Jun Gol.

The first spearman chased the huge bear downwards. As the chasers raised shouts on both sides, he had to run straight ahead, unable to escape sideways. As the spearman was coming nearer and nearer, the bear perceived the chaser, and whirled round in a fury. He dashed towards the spearman, jerking up his forepaws. If the man speared the animal, the result might be disastrous, for if the bear snatched his spear, the hunter might well be hurt, for the animal's hide and fat are so thick that you could not pierce the hide, and taking advantage of this, a bear might grab the spear and hurt the hunter.

Therefore, a spearman uses the tip of the spear on the forelegs of a bear that has turned round. Then the stupid animal will always grab the handle of the spear and pull it towards its chest. The bear's chest is covered with white hair, and it has less fat there and a thinner hide. Because the bear pulls the spear, pushed down from above, towards itself with all his power, the blade of the spear will pierce his hide and go into the chest. The deeper the blade enters, the more the bear writhes with pain, and the more the beast writhes, the deeper the blade goes in. The spearman, gripping the handle as firmly as he can, keeps pushing downward. Now the bear gasps, quite exhausted. Then the second spearmen with spears and the club-men with birch clubs pounce on the beast from both sides, spearing it and beating its head.

Kim Hyong Jik and Hong Jun Gol climbed down to the place where the spearman and the bear were wrangling, each holding one end of the spear. At a glance the man and the beast seemed to be trying hard to snatch the spear, but, in fact, the bear down below pulls the end of the spear towards its chest, whereas the spearman on the slope pushes it down, until it finally goes deep into the bear's chest.

"The bear is stupid, indeed, as a saying goes. It pulls the spear towards itself, pushes right into its own chest, and just keeps on pulling, to get the spear."

"You are right, sir. The foolish bear pulls the end of the spear to stab its own chest, though it only pulls with all its force to get hold of the spear." The pockmarked old man told Kim Hyong Jik.

At this moment the second spearmen and chasers ran up to the huge bear and speared and clubbed it hard. Finally the beast went limp.

Kim Hyong Jik watched the bear-hunt with interest. He was astounded at their courage, their superb skiing and their toughness.

There is an anecdote about their speed. One day a hunter at the top of a mountain higher than this one shouted down at a passer-by who was walking along the highroad down below, smoking, "Stop there a moment. I need a light for my cigarette." The passer-by looked round and spotted a shouting man on the top of the mountain waving his hand. He thought the man above was crazy and was about to go on, when all of a sudden there was a whistling sound and the man

who had been standing on the top of the mountain flew down like a lightning on his skis and asked for a light. The passer-by was dumbfounded.

Kim Hyong Jik was impressed to hear this sort of anecdote and to see them catch a powerful great bear with spears.

The hunters were in high spirits. The chasers also caught a wild boar a bit bigger than average one. They brought it up to a flat rock and began to cut it up. First they cut off one of the hindlegs and chopped off the meat. Another group built a fire on a wide and smooth rock, which was made redhot. They salted several cuts of meat and roasted it right there on the rock. The leading hunter and some of the spearmen took off the flasks strapped at their sides, which contained an oat liquor. The leading hunter poured the liquor into a cup which had been placed over the plug of the flask, and holding the cup towards Kim Hyong Jik with both hands, said, "Have a drink, sir. Wine tastes good when you drink it in the mountains. We hunters enjoy it."

The old man laughed cheerfully.

Though Kim Hyong Jik did not usually drink, he took the cup, saying, "Your bear-hunting was thrilling, indeed. In old days the hunters at Norang were good at hunting beasts, and when the Western barbarians invaded Kanghwa-do Island those crack shots wiped out the enemy. With the courage you showed today hunting the bear, I think you can beat any foreign invader. Ha, ha, ha...."

Kim Hyong Jik laughed boisterously. His words animated all present; and they asked him to remember and call on them, the folks at Hagaru, when the battle started.

After a few cups the faces of the hunters were flushed and they felt well warmed up.

"Well, then, let's dance a hunters' dance before we go down. Sir, it's a long established custom for us hunters to drink like this and dance a hunters' dance, when they have caught a big game. Since you are out here to see the hunt, you should see it and go back with us, even though you might be cold." The old man advised.

"I'm not cold. Go ahead and dance." Kim Hyong Jik agreed with pleasure. The hunters all rose and got ready for the dance. The spearmen took up their spears and the chasers their clubs. The leading hunter also led the dance. Spears and clubs in hands, they formed a circle and went round and

round moving both arms. It was quite a sight. The onlookers were strained to see their coarse yet powerful movements which expressed their strong will.

When the dance was over the hunters went down to the village carrying the bear and wild boar.

Next day Kim Hyong Jik was going to leave, when the master and mistress of the house, the pockmarked old man, the old man with a topknot and other villagers all came out and urged him to stay just another night. But he refused because of his urgent mission.

"We are awfully sorry, sir. Pardon us for seeing you off without serving you proper food," the mistress said.

"Since you are so busy, it can't be helped. But do stop by here the next time. We'll keep the gall of the bear we caught yesterday for you," said the leading hunter.

"Thank you. I'll come again. But next time when the independence fighters or patriots pass by here, please look after them."

"We certainly will. We have lived here in the mountains, not knowing the nation's situation. But now that we know about it, please don't worry." The pockmarked old man smiled.

Kim Hyong Jik went and the villagers came out of the village into the highroad to see him off, asking him repeatedly to come again, and shared their sorrow in the parting.

The day Kim Hyong Jik arrived at the crown of Mt. Oga-san he was met by Chon Yong Tae and two young soldiers of the Independence Army whom Won Dong Yu had sent.

Two days later Kim Hyong Jik reached Chunggangjin where he stayed overnight at Chon Yong Tae's and crossed the Amnok-gang River on the ferry. The border town of Linkiang was just as bleak and gloomy as he remembered it from last year. Kim Hyong Jik took lodgings in an alleyway at Song Byong Du's inn, where he had stayed the last time. The noble and kind-hearted Song Byong Du was happy to see Kim Hyong Jik.

Next day he sent the two youths who had come to Mt. Oga-san, back to Won Dong Yu's unit. Kim Hyong Jik planned to work with the organizations and independence fighters around Linkiang for a week or so and then to leave for Won Dong Yu's unit.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLAN ACTED OUT FAR AND WIDE

1

Won Dong Yu's unit was in a valley thick with evergreen trees.

There were several long log cabins on the hillside at the head of the valley which were used as barracks. Another L-shaped cabin above them housed their headquarters. Right at the top, at the foot of Suri-bong Hill some big log cabins which looked fairly new faced a rather wide drill ground.

About a hundred armed soldiers stood on the drill ground in fine array; nearly the whole of Won Dong Yu's unit was here. All the soldiers had the same fur caps on and they wore large darkish Korean jackets pulled in by leather belts, cartridge belts slung across their shoulders, tight leggings and black canvas shoes. They were armed with flintlocks or with modern rifles, and some had Korean swords at their side.

All the troops looked strained and anxious, watching the road that ran down the valley, as if they were waiting for a combat order or for an inspection.

An unusually tall man, who looked like an officer kept stalking up and down in front of the column, with his hands behind him. He had a wooden holster on his hip. His oval face looked very tense.

Presently a group of people came out of the wood. The tall officer took a few steps towards them. When they reached the edge of the training ground, the officer betrayed excite-

ment and joy, mingled with confusion, then almost immediately his face took on a calm expression. He turned on his heel and went to the right end of the front line of the column, to where he was supposed to stand.

The group of people approached the column of soldiers. They were led by the stocky Commander Won Dong Yu, and behind him strode Kim Hyong Jik in a dark brown fur cap.

"Atten—shun"

The officer's command rang through the valley, and men came to attention.

Won Dong Yu, who had brought Kim Hyong Jik to the front of the ranks, stepped aside, asking, "Please come up this way, sir."

Kim Hyong Jik stopped, and glanced reservedly over at Won Dong Yu. But, as soon as he noted Won's entreating expression, he stepped forward to stand almost abreast of Won Dong Yu, who backed down slightly. Hong Jun Gol and Chon Yong Tae stood side by side some way behind.

"Eyes front!"

At the stentorian shout of command from the same officer, all heads turned to Kim Hyong Jik. The officer came over at a run, stood at attention in front of Kim Hyong Jik and looked up at him without a word. His face showed unbounded delight and excitement. Kim Hyong Jik also looked at the officer with a slight smile.

The officer was Kong Gi Myong, whom Kim Hyong Jik had not seen since the meeting last spring. Kong had been recommended and sent here as staff officer to Won Dong Yu's unit. Kim Hyong Jik remembered the emaciated face of Kong Gi Myong as he lay wounded with Hong Jun Gol in a bush on Mt. Ryongak-san. But the Kong Gi Myong who stood before him now, looked sturdy and tough, as becomes the staff officer of an army unit.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, the unit is lined up for your inspection. Staff officer Kong Gi Myong reporting."

Kong reported in a slightly quivering, low voice, quite different from the voice in which he had just now been issuing commands.

"Thank you."

Kim Hyong Jik expressed his pleasure in these brief words.

Kong Gi Myong waited a few moments, before he turned on his heel and doubled back to his position.

Then Won Dong Yu took a step forward. He lifted up his mild, dignified roundish face to look over his men. His emotion was beyond measure. Until two years ago in a small log cabin at the head of the valley he and a dozen or so soldiers armed with flintlocks had despaired over their lot. It seemed only yesterday. Had he not met Kim Hyong Jik, he would never have seen this day. One after another, the hardships of his past flashed through his mind like a kaleidoscope.

The year the country was lost to the Japs he had quit middle school and returned to Chosan, his home town, opened a community school and formed a secret armed group. When this was exposed he crossed the Amnok-gang River in a blizzard with dozens of hot-blooded youths. At that time he had still had a great hope that somewhere in the land of Chientao there must be a man who would show him how to win back the lost territory. Taking with him the young men who were even then regretting joining him or wavering, he had wandered across the bleak plains of Manchuria to meet the champions of the independence movement. Yet, Won Dong Yu found no leader. The vacillation and despair among his men increased. Finally with the remaining men he founded a unit of his own. Though it was called a unit things had been as hopeless as before. With 20 or so soldiers and a few flintlocks he had wandered in an alien land where he had had no one to rely on, had been pushed around among other units of the Independence Army and independence movement groupings large and small; he had had little say among them. As he looked up at the sky over this alien wilderness, the tears of blood would flow from his torn heart. Then unexpectedly he had met Kim Hyong Jik at Linkiang. He felt a lump in his throat even now at the thought that he had learnt from Kim Hyong Jik for a whole day and night in a back room at Song Byong Du's inn. He felt keenly that that day and night had been a turning point in his life—from despair to regeneration.

Kim Hyong Jik had not only taught him how to build up his troops but had also sent him scores of patriotic youths, by making trips around Linkiang and Chunggang himself. Even after his return home he had been so kind as to assign that

very competent worker, Staff Officer Kong Gi Myong to him and had given detailed guidance on reorganizing his unit. Then he had sent a lot of young people to him and brought his unit under the banner of the KNA. Now before him stood nearly a hundred soldiers adequately armed and trained who had already in a small way tasted battle. It was indeed like a dream. He had suffered thousands of hardships, while he was drifting in the vast stormy ocean, clinging to a plank. But now he had a big boat that would cover many miles in one breath. If he had a weight on his mind at this very moment it was that he had failed to build up his unit as well as Kim Hyong Jik might have expected and that he had not worked too well with other organizations in the adjacent areas, particularly with other Independence Army units. But he was not worried, for Kim Hyong Jik had come here in person to help him.

Quietening his leaping heart, Won Dong Yu said calmly.

"Officers and men, today we are going to review the first stage of training since our unit's reorganization. We have the pleasure of receiving Mr. Kim Hyong Jik whom we've awaited so anxiously. This is another auspicious event, I should say. In spite of the heavy pressure of responsibility as the national leader, he was kind enough to come hundreds of miles to see us. I must remind you that it is thanks to his teachings and his care that we will be capable of doing our share at the decisive hour of the independence struggle to throw the Japs out and to free our country. I'm sure that on this glorious day you'll gladden him by making good use of the skills that you have learned."

Commander Won Dong Yu's speech was over.

"Right—turn!"

At Kong Gi Myong's shout of command the whole column turned right.

"Shoulder arms!"

With a slap of rifles hitting palms and shoulders, a forest of guns rose over the orderly columns, glittering in the sun.

"March past, by platoons. Forward march!"

The march began. The firm steps resounded across the valley. A formation of 20 or so at a time moved forward, raising dust. They marched in perfect order. As they marched

past Kim Hyong Jik, platoon after platoon saluted on the command of their platoon leaders. Kim Hyong Jik returned their salute with a wave of the hand.

Kim Hyong Jik was profoundly touched to see the young lively faces marching past in order, their rifle barrels gleaming.

Some day Korea's sons and daughters, millions of them, under a single banner, will form iron ranks like that and rush into the sacred battle for independence, Kim Hyong Jik thought. If you unite the whole independence movement and the Independence Army units here in West Chientao alone they would be a formidable force.

Before his eyes he saw the image of many heads of factions, groups and associations of the independence movement and various army units, whom he had met during his week in Linkiang. There were many chiefs but no men of high calibre. The narrow territory of west Chientao was full of people engaged in the independence movement, yet you could hardly find any patriotic zeal to fight the Japanese. They had set up their own autonomous areas like feudal princes; each of whom styled himself as head of the independence movement, wore silk clothes and sat on a high chair like a throne in a sumptuous house with bear and tiger skins. They fell into two categories—those who believed the Shanghai theory that the independence movement must depend on foreign help. They hoped that before long the Western powers would hand them Korean independence on a plate; meanwhile their concern was to increase their forces, their main concern was jockeying for position to be well placed in the struggle for power when the great day came; the other clamoured loudly for the restoration of national rights, for independence, though in practice, they had given up doing anything at all and were really only concerned for their own skins, so that they might live out their remaining days peaceably if abroad.

That was how matters stood with the leadership, so that those led or being jostled about between them were groping in agony and vacillation like a man who has strayed off his path. It was not easy to unite them under the KNA banner by meeting them just a couple of times. During his week at Linkiang he had realized still more keenly that the ranks of the independence movement could only be bound together through a far-reaching plan and much practical work. So he

was touched at the formations of Won Dong Yu's unit marching proudly past him.

"We have five platoons in all, three at headquarters and two stationed in adjacent villages. All except one took part in this inspection." Commander Won Dong Yu explained. Kim Hyong Jik nodded as he watched the marching ranks.

"The fourth formation with modern rifles is Platoon Two. We have not yet replaced all our guns with new ones. We have tried hard to reorganize and train in modern army methods and tactics as you advised but we have not been able to wash out our old habits completely." Commander Won Dong Yu went on, sorry to note the huge Korean jackets and flintlocks of the marching men.

"But they are not at all bad. They are well trained. We should buckle down once more to improve the arms and training and get them all to the level of the second platoon. They will have to be a match for the Japs."

Kim Hyong Jik said this with an air of satisfaction.

"Yes, sir, I think I'll manage that before the year is out."

The last formation marched past before them, and Kim Hyong Jik stood motionless, staring the line of soldiers marching into the wood.

And those loud hurrahs for independence
Will move mountains and boil the East Sea.

A boisterous song sounded out.

"Mr. Kim, we have arranged some shooting and tactical training. Would you care to come and watch?"

Won Dong Yu asked hesitantly, wondering if Kim Hyong Jik should not rather rest after his journey.

"Why not? Let's go."

Kim Hyong Jik stepped down from the dais and went towards the wood into which the formation had disappeared. Won Dong Yu, Hong Jun Gol, Chon Yong Tae and Kong Gi Myong followed quickly in short steps. The shooting range had been prepared at the base of Suri-bong Hill.

The platoons were gathered there. It started with a match between the platoons. Five picked men from each platoon shot at the targets with modern rifles. Their marksmanship was excellent. Kim Hyong Jik looked still more satisfied than during the march-past.

His praise raised their morale. Now they went over to the tactical inspection. Army A attacked and army B defended Suri-bong Hill at the end of the valley. Commander Won Dong Yu summed up the inspection and persuaded Kim Hyong Jik to make a short speech. Kim Hyong Jik spoke well of the way the soldiers had worked, and then in simple words explained the principles and aims of the KNA, and dwelt on the part the armed forces would play when the decisive moment came.

When Kim Hyong Jik had finished speaking it was past noon. The unit came down the hill, singing army songs. The officers followed with Kim Hyong Jik.

"You must have worked quite hard. Your troops are in good spirits, they shoot well and are even versed in modern tactics. They are so good."

Kim Hyong Jik was completely satisfied. Though there was still much to be desired, he was grateful to Commander Won Dong Yu, Kong Gi Myong and Chon Yong Tae for their patriotic loyalty; they had done all they could to build up the unit this way almost from scratch, in little more than a year.

"Oh, not at all, sir," Won Dong Yu replied very modestly. "In spite of all you have done for us our unit is still all too insignificant. But it was built up somehow, and I would say the main credit goes to Staff Officer Kong Gi Myong. As for me, I have never even seen a modern army, you know."

"Why, I have not done much, sir...," muttered Kong Gi Myong, blushing all over his long face. Kong was a reticent, inarticulate man.

"Of course, the credit does not go to any one person. This is the fruit of common efforts by officers, rank and file, of selfless patriotic devotion. They say a united force is mighty, and I realized it more keenly, while looking at the grown-up troops today. Don't you think so, Commander Won Dong Yu?" Kim Hyong Jik smiled and looked back at Won Dong Yu and others who followed him.

"I do, sir." Won Dong Yu replied, impressed by the way he never looked on anything superficially.

"Just before, I thought of this," said Kim Hyong Jik, but he did not continue and walked on, looking at the far sky over Linkiang. Those who had been following looked expectantly at him, before he spoke.

"If we could unite at least the independence organizations and Independence Army units scattered over West and North Chientao and build them up with new rifles and a military command, they would be a really great force. Particularly in view of the geographical advantages these regions have, they could be a great menace to the whole Japanese life line."

Kim Hyong Jik's eyes glittered with hope. This made Won Dong Yu suddenly conscience-stricken. In fact, in some corner of his mind something had oppressed him from the moment he met Kim Hyong Jik at Linkiang ferry that morning. Before Kim Hyong Jik's arrival here, Won Dong Yu himself had been endeavouring with Staff Officer Kong, to negotiate the merger of his unit at least with those of Cha Go Ryun, Sim Hong Jin and Kim Ryong Chon, but in vain. So he had had to meet his leader without result. The biggest headache Won Dong Yu had now was that Kim Hyong Jik was planning to visit all these units and organizations himself. And there were men in the ranks of those disorderly units who were only concerned with power and there were even enemy agents and spies. On top of that the rugged mountain roads that led to them were rampant with bandits and robbers who would even attack in broad daylight. So it would be very dangerous for Kim Hyong Jik to go to them. Therefore, two days ago after his consultation with Kong Gi Myong, Commander Won Dong Yu had sent out messages earnestly requesting Sim Hong Jin, Kim Ryong Chon and Cha Go Ryun to send their delegates to a scheduled conference in the presence of Kim Hyong Jik, the leader of the independence movement. This too had fizzled out, however. Last night the messengers who had been to Sim Hong Jin and Kim Ryong Chon's units had both come back without bringing a reply and there was no news as yet from the platoon leader who had gone to Cha Go Ryun's unit.

At any rate, Won Dong Yu was determined to dissuade Kim Hyong Jik from going into these dangerous places this time. Heaving a silent sigh, he said.

"That is true. So before you came I did what little I could, but...."

"You mean you tried to negotiate a merger?"

Kim Hyong Jik halted and looked back.

"Yes, sir. Staff Officer Kong and I visited Sim Hong Jin, Kim Ryong Chon and Cha Go Ryun's units. But each suggested that we join their unit."

"Join their unit?"

"Yes, sir. They want us simply to hand over. And Commander Cha Go Ryun even refused to meet me."

"Why?"

"There may be a reason for it. Years ago when I was wandering about I and my colleagues were under Commander Cha Go Ryun for several months. At the time he asked me to serve him as platoon leader, but I turned down his offer and left his unit. Apparently he thinks that now that my unit has grown in strength, I want to take over his unit."

"I think you know Staff Officer Pyo of Cha Go Ryun's unit. Have you met him?"

"Yes, sir, it was he who indicated all this. So, as the last resort I sent a messenger to each unit the day before yesterday, requesting them to come here right away to discuss a merger in Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's presence, but this request...."

Won Dong Yu explained what had happened, falteringly.

"Is that so?"

Saying this Kim Hyong Jik stared silently at far ravine; he was in a pensive mood. But presently he continued.

"You have worked very hard. Very hard indeed. But, Commander Won Dong Yu, let us not be in too much of a hurry with the merger."

"Pardon, sir?"

Won Dong Yu was somewhat surprised because Kim Hyong Jik was so nonchalant. So were the others.

"As you know, Commander Won Dong Yu, everyone in the independence movement advocates a merger, but in their hearts they interpret merger as the subjection of one to the other. Suppose someone holds up the banner of merger and another responds. Would it be the genuine merger that we advocate, a merger for the true unity and cohesion of the independence movement? What do you think about it?" Kim Hyong Jik inquired, giving a circular glance at the comrades. They could not reply because they did not know whether it would be a genuine merger, whether there was any other form of real merger; they could not fathom his thought. Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"It might achieve a tentative formal merger, but in their hearts they would remain as separate as ever. You know the saying about sleeping in the same bed but dreaming different

dreams? This kind of merger would break at the first slight hardship. Then how can a genuine merger be achieved?" he asked looking round at the comrades. But they just stared at him, waiting for his answer.

"It shouldn't be one joining the other nor yet one's merging with the other. There has to be a centre around which all independence groupings can unite. This centre should be a great stream that is unquestionably the main stream of the revolutionary movement, which can guide the whole independence movement correctly and embrace its every form, a main stream that is such that no revolutionary or independence organization can exist or fight without."

"Sir, is not our KNA this main stream?" Hong Jun Gol asked. The others seemed to be of the same opinion and looked at Kim Hyong Jik.

"It will not become the main stream just because we make this claim and mergers could not be achieved by shouting for them under the banner of the KNA. A merger will be achieved when everybody concerned is aware of the orientation of the independence movement and agrees with our principles and policy. So what should we do for the present? Before we advocate mergers we should first go deep among the independence fighters and the masses, convince them all that this is the right road for the independence movement to take. We should steadily, patiently, confidently go straight to the people's hearts. Meanwhile it is vital to go on strengthening our KNA organizations, and to be very active. In other words, to build up the KNA into that main stream of revolution. Then, all the smaller streams will have no alternative but to flow into our big stream."

Kim Hyong Jik's eyes showed bright intelligence and profound thought.

"Mr. Kim, I'm afraid the trouble was caused because I was too hasty. I did not fully understand your far-reaching plan." Won Dong Yu's voice was emotional.

"Ha, ha, ha, you don't have to take it so seriously. We are all working on that policy. Don't worry so much. I intend to meet everybody I can this time and to have heart-to-heart talk with them. I'll go see Commanders Sim Hong Jin, Kim Ryong Chon and Cha Go Ryun."

"But you mustn't do that, Mr. Kim. You mustn't." Won Dong Yu insisted looking very worried.

"Why?"

Won Dong Yu explained how dangerous it would be to visit those units. Kim Hyong Jik slowed down and listened to him. And when Won Dong Yu finished explaining Kim Hyong Jik walked ahead in silence for a while.

"Thank you. But we must meet them come what may. Not only once, but two or three or ten times even, if we fail to achieve our goal. They are also part of the independence movement and still have patriotic loyalty in their hearts. Certainly Cha Go Ryun's unit I must see them at all costs—I have good reason."

The party walked on without a word. Won Dong Yu was still more worried at Kim Hyong Jik's resolve. However, he did not express his worry and followed in his wake. He was very anxious to know what had happened to the platoon leader who had gone to Cha Go Ryun's unit.

At this very moment there was a clatter of hoofs from the timber yonder. The gallop increased and soon an army horse and rider appeared on the highroad.

"Isn't that the leader of Platoon Five?"

Won Dong Yu halted to look back at Staff Officer Kong.

"I think it is, sir."

The leader of Platoon Five pulled up several paces away, jumped nimbly down and came running towards Kim Hyong Jik and his party. He was a young man in his twenties. His head was bandaged, and the bandage was bloody.

"I've come back, Commander," he reported, standing in attention in front of Commander Won Dong Yu.

"What has happened? Are you wounded?"

Three men had been sent out, but only the platoon leader had come back, in bloody bandage....

It was a bad sign and Commander Won Dong Yu froze.

The platoon leader took a time to gain composure, then reported what had happened.

They had been ordered to meet Cha Go Ryun in person and convey the message, but they had been only permitted to see his staff officer, and that after they had been disarmed at the sentry post. Pyo tore the envelope open and read the message. As he read it, his face had looked sinister. He flung open the door and shouted out, "Arrest these fellows!" The three people were tied up and dragged out and thrown into a place which looked like a storehouse. They had been beaten

and tortured all day long—their legs tied together and twisted by two sticks inserted between them. During their interrogation the captor asked them, "Out with the true intention of your visit here," and "You have been sent here by Won Dong Yu to entice Commander Cha Go Ryun out and force him to surrender or just to eliminate him, haven't you?"

Next day, that is, this morning Cha Go Ryun appeared in the storehouse, and staring silently at the three men for a long while, said.

"They are perfectly unpardonable, but we don't have to kill them, do we? Release them and send them back right away. And you, tell Won Dong Yu that if he wants to conduct the independence movement, do it conscientiously, and must not harbour such dirty ambitions, and also that this Cha Go Ryun is still alive as you see."

The platoon leader continued with his report.

"Staff Officer Pyo insisted on shooting us, but as Cha Go Ryun shouted him down, he set us free reluctantly. But how could we know this blackguard would be lying in ambush on our way.... We had been disarmed and could not fight, so we fled and narrowly escaped from death, but Dong Su was wounded in the body and I on my forehead."

"And what has happened to Dong Su?" Won Dong Yu asked. He was barely managing to repress his smouldering anger.

"Chang Gun took him into their barracks. His wound was not fatal. Commander, as I had my gun snatched by them, I should die. I didn't return to live. Commander, allow me to lead my platoon on a mission. I'll behead the damned staff officer and disarm the whole bunch of Cha Go Ryun's unit and herd them back here."

The young platoon leader's eyes were burning with anger. Clenching their huge fists, both Staff Officer Kong and Hong Jun Gol glanced alternatively at Kim Hyong Jik and Commander Won Dong Yu. Kim Hyong Jik's face was clouded. Won Dong Yu closed his eyes quietly, God knows why. Opening his eyes after a while Won gave a long sigh and said:

"Calm down, platoon leader. I'll take care of the matter. Go and get your wound seen to. Staff Officer Kong, go to Dong Su with him. I'll follow you right away. If necessary, we'll send a horseman to Linkiang for a doctor."

Staff Officer Kong went away with the platoon leader. The party remained standing without a word for a while.

"Mr. Kim, what shall I do?" asked Won Dong Yu in a quivering voice. His large kind-hearted eyes betrayed an unquenchable wrath. Kim Hyong Jik turned slowly to him.

"I'll go to Cha Go Ryun's unit," Kim Hyong Jik said firmly.

"Why, Mr. Kim! That's...."

Hong Jun Gol was more thunderstruck than Won Dong Yu.

"No, you mustn't, sir. You heard about the situation just now. We could never let you go there." Won Dong Yu tried hard to dissuade Kim Hyong Jik.

"Mr. Kim, leave dealing with Cha Go Ryun's unit to us. We'll do our best to settle it the way you want, but we can't let you walk into the jaws of death."

Chon Yong Tae, too, stepped forward and tried to dissuade Kim Hyong Jik.

Kim Hyong Jik looked leisurely around at his comrades, saying: "It is because they are in the jaws of death that I intend to go to them. I must go without delay and rescue Commander Cha and his unit."

Won Dong Yu and Chon Yong Tae could not read what was behind Kim Hyong Jik's words and they looked at him doubtfully.

"Staff Officer Pyo of Cha Go Ryun's unit is a rather suspicious character," said Kim Hyong Jik.

"Suspicious?"

Won Dong Yu and Chon Yong Tae were stunned to hear this.

"According to the information obtained by Mr. Hong, Pyo Bom Su sneaked into the Righteous Volunteers Army in Chungchong Province and then fled with several thousand *won* of their army funds. He was arrested crossing the Amnok-gang and put in Sinuiju prison, and no one knows how he got out and joined Cha Go Ryun's unit."

"Why, is he one of those?" Won Dong Yu's eyes popped in amazement.

"Not only that. Cha Go Ryun's unit has been in a great confusion, ever since Pyo Bom Su's joining it. Last summer the former staff officer and many other members of Cha Go Ryun's unit were captured and killed by the Japs as soon as they had crossed the border; Pyo Bom Su and the subordinates he brought with him are trying to gain control of the unit; and they

have engendered bitter antagonism among members of the independence movement, such as we see today. Taking this all in all, Pyo Bom Su is undoubtedly a very suspicious character. If my information is true, I would say, that Cha Go Ryun's unit is doomed to destruction because of manoeuvres."

The people were struck speechless because the situation was so urgent and grave.

"If that is so, you certainly mustn't go there." Hong Jun Gol broke the silence.

"Then you mean we should stand by with our arms folded and watch the downfall of Cha Go Ryun's unit?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, and nobody could answer him.

"They are rotten already...." Chon Yong Tae murmured as if to himself. At this Kim Hyong Jik's eyes flashed.

"What are you talking about? There are many youths, many good soldiers there. They are our dear brothers who have left the land where they were born and their loving parents, wives and children, and came to this harsh alien land to find a way to fight for independence. So did Commander Cha Go Ryun. If we stand by watching their destruction by vicious enemies, how can we call ourselves true revolutionaries responsible for Korea's destiny?" Kim Hyong Jik's words touched his comrades' hearts to the quick.

"You are right, sir. But let it be me that goes," volunteered Won Dong Yu, approaching Kim Hyong Jik.

"Please send me."

Chon Yong Tae approached too.

"Thank you. But I'm afraid these things won't be set right unless I go myself. It's not that I distrust you. Commander Cha Go Ryun is misunderstanding Commander Won Dong Yu. Would you prepare two horses right away? I'll leave with Mr. Hong."

"You mustn't, Mr. Kim. How can we let you go to certain death?..." Won Dong Yu could not agree to Kim Hyong Jik's plan.

"Ha, ha, ha. I'm not going to my death; a crusader for independence is going to visit an Independence Army unit, that is all. A revolutionary must always be prepared for three possibilities: he can be beaten to death, frozen to death or starved to death—anywhere, anytime and quite unexpectedly. How can we make revolution if we are afraid of death? Please, stop worrying and get us horses, would you?"

Kim Hyong Jik was absolutely matter-of-fact and so resolute in his demeanour that everybody realized that it would be quite impossible to dissuade him.

So after simple lunch, Kim Hyong Jik and Hong Jun Gol started out. And Commander Won Dong Yu, to provide against emergency, ordered Staff Officer Kong to have three platoons follow Kim Hyong Jik and his aide, unnoticed and some way behind to encircle Cha Go Ryun's unit and keep a watchful eye on things.

2

Cha Go Ryun was walking leisurely along a ridge. The mountain was bare. At noon the bleak continental wind had raised dust and darkened the sky, but toward evening it was less ferocious. Only the far mountain ranges near the Amnokgang were still covered with yellow dust, and in the dust hung a lustreless sun. A short bristle-tooth oak bare of leaves swayed in the chilly twilight.

Cha Go Ryun took one step after another, his massive body moving ponderously.

His greying shapely moustache and the skirts of his outer animal skin coat thrown over his shoulders fluttered slightly in the wind.

Cha Go Ryun stopped and watched the frigid scene of the continent in twilight. The raw wind blew past the warm cheeks of the commander who was not yet completely recovered from intoxication. Cha Go Ryun heaved a prolonged sigh. The landscape was as bleak and forlorn as his mind. Deep grief pervaded his heart like the cold wind. Slowly he began to recite a poem in a strong throaty voice.

Ten years is gone since a man stalwart
Left his home iron clad.
It's still so far away to go
Though the frosts spread on his temples.
Merciless heaven, dost thou hear
The wails of those fellow countrymen dear?

Looking up at the alien sky
I only bitterly cry....

Cha Go Ryun's bloodshot eyes were dim with tears. He was sunk in an abyss of grief and lately often shed tears even, reciting this poem.

I'm old, he thought, old and worn out. The thought was eating at his heart these days. Only these last two years, never before. He was not sentimental, a hero's blood coursed in his veins. Even while all Korea's people languished in their conquered country, he had not lamented; but had gone to fight, with sword unsheathed and militant war cries. Even five years ago after a bad defeat in a big battle in the Rangrim Mountains when he had had to regroup his troops and cross the Amnok-gang he had kept up his spirits. His great ambition to command a huge armed force in an assault across that river to crush the Japs burned in his heart. However, spring before last his unit was entrapped unexpectedly by Japanese punitive forces on the Amnok-gang, and his troops had fought, careless of their lives. He had regrouped the remnants, the men who had been fortunate enough somehow to get away—only a fifth of the number before this last battle. It was a miserable defeat. And it marked the beginning of Cha Go Ryun's decline. There had been an increasing number of deserters even from the regrouped force; they had been disillusioned. With his old Staff Officer Kang Ik Gun, his right hand man right from the early days, Cha Go Ryun had done all that he could to regroup and shore up the unit. What was most urgent was to reinforce the troops and obtain funds. He had had to replenish the unit and replace the old guns with new ones. He had often dispatched his men into the homeland but none of them had come back. Finally he had sent Staff Officer Kang Ik Gun, his only lieutenant, but even he had died on the gallows of the Japs. This was a shattering blow. After that Cha Go Ryun had, as a last resort, himself visited the inhabitants and influential people along the border, but few people would entrust their beloved children to a commander now on the decline or even contribute money. He had now realized that there was no longer a way to revive his unit, that his star had set. His own fate was unimportant, but thinking of his country's decline he shed tears of blood.

Sometimes he had the urge to kill himself with the sword hanging on the wall, but the situation was so appalling that he

feared that even were he dead he could not close his eyes. And still he had a vain but lingering hope that some miracle might happen—even tomorrow. He felt that right until the last moment he would have to prolong his worthless life, to seek for some way out. Meanwhile his unit had been left almost entirely in Pyo Bom Su's hands.

Again this day he had invited a refugee living in a nearby village and spent the whole day with him, drinking and playing chess. He had just seen him off over the hill.

Cha Go Ryun stared abstractedly into the darkening sky above the Amnok-gang. On the far horizon he could see the steep Rangrim Mountains veiled in yellow dust. It was in those mountains that Cha Go Ryun had been active as commander of a large force. Now it almost seemed as if all that had happened in another lifetime. The tears welled up in his eyes and his heart was breaking at the thought that he might never return to the mountains that would ever be imprinted in his memory, that he was destined to die like a dog in this alien wilderness.

Cha Go Ryun gave such a deep sigh that sank the ground and walked on down the hill.

There were several log cabins at the foot of the mountain and slender columns of smoke rose from their chimneys. Someone was chopping firewood on the backyard of the log cabin that was used as mess hall. The sound of the axe rang through the valley.

Pyo Bom Su was seated facing Nam Chil, the leader of the first platoon. Pyo's hawk-like face with high cheek bones and a short jaw looked very glum. Nam Chil stole a look at Pyo now and again.

"I told you to get rid of them, and secretly, and you failed?" Pyo Bom Su spat out, his slanted eyes glaring fiercely.

"They were so quick we couldn't catch them up, sir." Nam Chil muttered, his head drooping, like a criminal's.

"You stupid asses. How dare you make excuses? You had guns, they were unarmed and still you missed.... Oh, hell! What can one do with such dumbbells."

"But one of them was almost certainly killed and another was hit on the head." Nam Chil kept grumbling.

"You fool, you did such a clumsy job. What if Won Dong Yu attacks us now? Get the hell out of here and tell the sentries to be extra watchful," Pyo Bom Su roared. Nam Chil

sprang to his feet, and saluted and went out at the double. Pyo Bom Su remained seated at the table, and gazed piercingly into space. He had a sinister look in his eyes. He hit the table top with his clenched fist.

"No, there must be no more delays," he said disdainfully to himself. Then he got up and started pacing up and down the room with arms folded. He thought the time was ripe for him to take the final action. His plan had been to gang up with a few more small units stationed nearby in a mutiny and to cross the river. But clearly this plan would be quite impossible now.

These last two years, Won Dong Yu's unit had had such good luck that they had gradually grown to considerable proportions and several of the tiny units in the adjacent area had joined them. On top of this, rumour had it that a man named Kim Hyong Jik had recently come over to Linkiang and was exerting great influence on the population, the independence movement and armed forces in these parts. And not long ago Won Dong Yu had visited here himself and proposed to negotiate the merger and, only yesterday, had sent here a message saying that this Kim Hyong Jik would like to meet Commander Cha Go Ryun in person. Outwardly Cha Go Ryun shook his head, yet at the back of his heart he seemed to want to meet the man. I mustn't dillydally any longer, Pyo thought. Otherwise, I won't be able to take even Cha Go Ryun's unit that is in my grip across the border. Moreover, yesterday they blundered over those messengers from Won Dong Yu and you cannot tell if Won Dong Yu might not bring up his troops tomorrow even to retaliate. So there must be no more delay, he thought. I must take action tonight. It would not be too great a problem because the agents he had brought here with him were spread round all the platoons—of which were not many. At the dead of night they could disarm the lot, force them to surrender and then kill or capture Cha Go Ryun before he marched all the area across the Amnok-gang. His only worry was Cha Go Ryun's bodyguard, who was loyal to his commander. His watch was flawless even in the night. Pyo Bom Su decided that he would assign Nam Chil, the leader of the first platoon and his own man to deal with the bodyguard, while he himself would take a couple of agile fellows with him, to kill Cha Go Ryun. As soon as it gets dark, he thought, I'll have to get my men to plan it and send one of them to inform the Japanese military police detachment at

Chunggang on the far side of the river. Pyo paced the room as he turned all this over in his mind. Pyo Bom Su was a man of iron, yet having once decided on immediate action, his heart beat wildly though he knew his plan was perfect, that he need not worry. But for some reason he was unable to quieten himself.

Pyo Bom Su had had mixed feelings when while in Sinuiju prison he had suddenly been sent for by the chief of the police department of North Pyongan Province and given his present task. Pyo had been delighted that not only would he be released but, that if he was successful, he would get a high position and money enough to live in luxury for the rest of his days. On the other hand he had trembled with fear when he was told to smuggle himself into the Independence Army and work as a spy and provocateur for two or three years. Yet he was more afraid of dying behind iron bars.

He crossed the Amnok-gang with three subordinates provided by the Jap military police and had wandered around the province of Chientao. He had been none too confident. Then, last spring, he had visited Cha Go Ryun who was making desperate efforts to recruit, and had succeeded in getting into his renowned Independence Army unit. Moreover, it had not taken him long to become a platoon leader.

Then last autumn he had wormed his way up to staff officer when he had informed the Jap military police at Chunggang that former staff officer and the whole nucleus of the unit were on their way into the homeland for underground activities and they had all been killed.

It had thrown Cha Go Ryun into such utter despair that he had almost ceased to care about the unit's destiny. And he had put his confidence in Pyo Bom Su, regarding Pyo as the only man capable of saving the unit. Pyo Bom Su had obtained a dozen or so modern rifles and recruited new men. Cha Go Ryun thought that though somewhat rude and sloppy, Pyo had been working hard to establish discipline in the unit and introduce modern military training. He had not the faintest idea that Pyo was hand in glove with the Japs and was plotting to draw his own armed lackeys into the unit so he could disarm them all and drive them across the river while Cha idled away his time, drinking, playing chess and indulging in poetry.

Pyo Bom Su stopped pacing and raised his head. His eyes still had a sinister glint. A sardonic smile hovered at the cor-

ners of his thin lips. I mustn't dillydally like this, he thought, and he went quickly to the door and threw it open.

Pyo Bom Su stood in the yard and watched the log cabin where Cha Go Ryun lived for a while. Cha Go Ryun had come down from the mountain and was walking into the house rather unsteadily. With a malignant smile Pyo Bom Su nodded and turned towards the first platoon's barracks. He was quite near the barracks when there was a shuffle and a voice called out "Staff Officer!"

Pyo swung round to see it was the leader of the guard. Pyo shot him a piercing look; every member of the unit feared his eyes. Petrified the leader of the guard reported, "A visitor is here to see the Commander, sir."

"A visitor? Who is it? Another man from Won Dong Yu's unit?"

Pyo Bom Su asked quickly with a glare.

"No, sir. From the homeland. He is over there....

The leader of the guard turned his trifle contracted face and indicated the road leading to the sentry post. Pyo Bom Su looked in that direction. Two strangers were being ushered in by a soldier.

"Who let them in?" Pyo Bom Su howled.

"Well, sir...."

The leader of the guard mumbled, stepping backward.

"Well what? Didn't I tell you to be sure to let me know about any visitor before you let him in? Go back this minute and send them away."

"Well, sir, but.... The man who seems to be his aide told me that the guest is Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, and that being in Chientao, he has dropped in here for a brief meeting with Commander Cha Go Ryun. And he didn't look like an ordinary visitor, so...."

"What? Mr. Kim Hyong Jik?"

Pyo Bom Su was pop-eyed. He had heard reports that Kim Hyong Jik was causing a great sensation among independence workers in the area along the Amnok-gang, but this man visiting here? Pyo Bom Su was taken aback and confused. But it couldn't be helped now, for Kim Hyong Jik and his man were approaching.

"You blockhead, didn't I tell you to inform me of any visitors in advance?" Pyo Bom Su grumbled. He was in an awkward position and he watched the two men following sentry

closely. One was a slender man in *turumagi* and the other was stocky and of medium height wearing a big jacket. The man in *turumagi* must be Kim Hyong Jik, thought Pyo Bom Su. Rather flurried Pyo Bom Su made up his mind and strode towards the visitors. As he stood face to face with Kim Hyong Jik, he gave a forced smile.

"Are you Mr. Kim? Your name is already familiar to me. You must have had many hardships on your long journey. I'm Staff Officer Pyo Bom Su of this unit...."

Pyo Bom Su's words were tedious because he thought that was how one should express respect for the visitor.

Returning his greeting mechanically Kim Hyong Jik looked at Pyo Bom Su and said in an informal tone of voice.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Pyo?"

Hong Jun Gol watched Pyo Bom Su with a slightly strained look.

"If you had let us know of your visit in advance, they would not have received you so rudely...."

Pyo Bom Su pretended to be sorry, glancing at the leader of the guard at whom he had raised hell just before.

"Ha, ha.... Why should I let you know of my visit in advance? I was passing through these parts and just dropped in." Kim Hyong Jik laughed unaffectedly.

"But we should have been prepared to receive you, a distinguished guest, and.... Let's go to the lodging first, you must be tired, sir. Look you there, run this minute and arrange my room for them." Pyo Bom Su turned to the leader of the guard.

"What hurry to the lodging? Please let me see Commander Cha Go Ryun," said Kim Hyong Jik, looking hard at Pyo Bom Su.

"Oh, you had better go to your lodging tonight to rest after your fatiguing journey, then you can meet him tomorrow morning. The Commander is not feeling too well these days, and I'm taking care of the unit, so you needn't make such haste to meet him...."

Pyo Bom Su wanted to prevent Kim Hyong Jik and his man from meeting Cha Go Ryun, so that his plan for tonight would go without a hitch.

"You say he is not feeling well? Then certainly I go to him now and offer him our greetings. Well, then, would you lead the way?"

Pyo Bom Su was embarrassed, but he had no alternative.

"Just one moment then.... Leader of the guard, go quickly to the Commander and tell him that Mr. Kim Hyong Jik has come."

The leader of the guard saluted obsequiously and ran off. Pyo Bom Su led the visitors, glaring after the leader of the guard with wrathful eyes.

He is such a simpleton, Pyo Bom Su complained to himself. He should never have let them in, he should have turned them away.

Meanwhile Cha Go Ryun was lying on a tiger-skin cushion, his head on a wooden pillow; he was reciting an old poem, looking at a small window through which darkness was creeping in.

At this moment the leader of the guard came rushing in and informed him of Kim Hyong Jik's arrival. The news was so sudden that Cha Go Ryun was at a loss how to receive the guest. Without stopping to think even, he went out bareheaded, in the clothes he stood up in.

In the yard Cha Go Ryun exchanged respectful greetings with Kim Hyong Jik. He hadn't known that Kim Hyong Jik was so young; from rumours he had had the image of a rather elderly crusader for independence. He ushered the guests into his room. His orderly had lit the lamp and spread out the same tiger-skin cushion. Cha Go Ryun sat face to face with Kim Hyong Jik, with Hong Jun Gol, Pyo Bom Su on either side between them.

"Thank you for your making such a long, hard journey to come here in person. And do please excuse me for not visiting you first, although I have long heard of your reputation."

When they were seated, Cha Go Ryun more formally made similar words he had made in the yard.

"Oh, don't mention it. You must be having hard times in this foreign wilderness, Commander," said Kim Hyong Jik, with a kindly look.

"I'm not having hard times, sir. I'm happy that here I don't have to look on the island barbarians with my own eyes. Ha, ha, ha...."

Cha Go Ryun laughed out loud, yet his laughter had a tinge of sadness.

Kim Hyong Jik did not say a word and looked smilingly at the Cha Go Ryun who seemed rather old and withered for

his age. As he finished laughing awkwardly, Cha Go Ryun continued:

"Well, how is the situation back in the homeland? I was told that the Japs have intensified their repressive rule, that our countrymen are living in an appalling condition. They say even the Jap teachers have sabres rattling on their sides and the mere utterance of the word independence leads to penal servitude or to strangulation on the spot. We only hear ghastly news of a rule that is savage without precedent," said Cha Go Ryun, his fiery eyes looking at Kim Hyong Jik.

"Why, such things occur almost every day. The Japs want to exterminate the Koreans once and for all if they can, they keep looking for pretexts," Kim Hyong Jik replied.

"That's heartbreaking. The Japs' brutal spirits are sky-high, whereas the independence movement seems at a lower ebb each day...."

"What do you mean by at a lower ebb? Here in the province of Chientao alone, many Independence Army troops and independence crusaders are building up their will power and their strength and fighting for the restoration of national rights, aren't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha. Mr. Kim, the independence movement in Chientao practically exists in name; it is almost completely done for. The Japs can't stretch out their hands at will here, so the movement just about survives. But that's all. Isn't it right, Staff Officer Pyo?"

Cha Go Ryun jerked his head to look at Pyo Bom Su. The latter, who had been absorbed in his own thoughts looked at Kim Hyong Jik with a frown on his narrow forehead, a trifle taken aback and straightening himself, replied stutteringly.

"Yes, sir. They are too strong...."

"Even so," said Kim Hyong Jik calmly, glancing in turns at Cha Go Ryun and Pyo Bom Su. "Isn't it too early to conclude that the independence movement has no way out?"

"Of course it is. How could I give up my determination to regain independence before I die? So I'm managing to keep my worthless self alive, watching the situation wishfully."

Cha Go Ryun heaved a prolonged sigh staring gloomily at the dancing flames of the lamp. He had been thinking of the miserable plight of himself and his armed force. Of late, while talking to people, he would often fall into such laments. And then he would pull himself together, remind himself that he,

the Cha Go Ryun, who used to command a powerful army, must not behave like this again. But when he met an acquaintance, he would start complaining about his plight and sigh with grief and sorrow.

Kim Hyong Jik, who had been watching Cha Go Ryun, went on.

"Commander Cha, don't be too discouraged. There is law in everything and there is justice for man. When winter has passed, the spring of regeneration will come. No trial, no hardship, however great, will prevent Korea from reviving as Korea."

The grief-stricken Cha Go Ryun was more of a piece now. He felt ashamed of having made useless complaints about himself to this young man whom he was meeting for the first time. He pretended to be enlivened and said.

"You are indeed full of fighting spirit. I've been informed of your great activities. By the way, how come you've made this long journey here despite the heavy pressure of your work?"

Cha Go Ryun glanced over at Kim Hyong Jik with his fishy bloodshot eyes. Kim Hyong Jik hesitated for a few moments before he replied.

"I've done nothing special. During my visit here this time I intend to meet a number of independence crusaders in Chientao for an exchange of views and to discuss aims and strategy."

"Oh, I'm very glad to hear that. I'm happy at the mere thought that in this old and desolate land there is a patriot who has such a big heart. Do please stay here for a few days at least. Let's sit up nights and have some frank discussions."

Cha Go Ryun spoke with great satisfaction, and Pyo Bom Su's face clouded as he watched him.

"But, Commander, it seems...." Pyo Bom Su faltered for some seconds before continuing. "Mr. Kim Hyong Jik came here to discuss the question raised by Commander Won Dong Yu several times."

"The question raised by Won Dong Yu?"

"The question of merger of our unit with Won Dong Yu's."

"The question of merger?!"

Cha Go Ryun's lack-lustre eyes glittered. He turned to look from Kim Hyong Jik to Hong Jun Gol. Pyo Bom Su edged up to Kim Hyong Jik.

"On this question I have already detailed our position to Commander Won Dong Yu. You are quite right, Mr. Kim, in

advocating the merger, but we can't merge with Won Dong Yu's unit at present. Because...."

Pyo Bom Su, who spoke with a cold look without blinking, had stopped for a moment to gather his thoughts, when Kim Hyong Jik laughed out loud. Cha Go Ryun and Pyo Bom Su were struck dumb while Hong Jun Gol kept a vigilant watch at Pyo. Then Kim Hyong Jik said:

"Mr. Pyo Bom Su, you seem much too hasty. Don't worry. I've no idea why everybody gets so excited at the very word 'merger' but in any case it's not what I came here to discuss. I simply wanted to meet Commander Cha just briefly on my way. Ha, ha...."

Cha Go Ryun was embarrassed. His face reddened. He looked in turns at Kim Hyong Jik and Pyo Bom Su, and in a stern voice asked Pyo Bom Su.

"Take it easy, man. Why do you talk so recklessly in front of the gentlemen? Go out and see about setting a table with drinks and that dinner is well prepared for the guests."

Pyo Bom Su was so ashamed that his face turned as red as a lobster. He got to his feet without a word and went out.

Cha Go Ryun said:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Kim. Please don't be offended. He is not a bad man. He is stout-hearted and well versed in modern military science, but he has a limited education and is rather narrow, that's all. It is thanks to his hard work that we are running our unit at all."

"Is that so?"

Kim Hyong Jik returned, glancing Cha Go Ryun with a pitiful look.

"Well, what are your impressions of the independence crusaders you have met here in the province of Chientao? They are in a mess, aren't they? I'm ashamed. Whenever independence crusaders like you come from the homeland to visit us, pinning great hopes on us, I feel inclined to sink into the ground with shame. At present, this province of Chientao is swarming with so many people claiming their leadership."

Cha Go Ryun started lamenting about the independence movement in Chientao as he was wont to anyone who seemed to understand him. Kim Hyong Jik listened silently and attentively.

3

Pyo Bom Su was standing out in the yard, with a fresh evening breeze cooling off his burning face. I made a blunder, he thought. Once Kim Hyong Jik and Cha Go Ryun were united in spirit and got talking and played chess all night, it would be difficult for me to take action, so I raised the merger business to cut their meeting short, but Kim Hyong Jik laughed it off, and I was just put to shame even before I could finish what I was saying. He realized that he had been rash and clumsy. A defect he repented of whenever he made a blunder. So what shall I do next, he thought. Should I put off my plan? No, he decided. You could never tell how many days this Kim Hyong Jik would stay here, and, moreover, from what he had heard and from what he had seen just now, Pyo knew that Kim Hyong Jik was no ordinary man, and that Cha Go Ryun might side with him. Then, Pyo's three years of hard work would be thrown away.

No, he decided, I must take action tonight, come what may. Kim Hyong Jik and his aide's faces loomed before his eyes.

What to do? Pyo Bom Su asked himself. Then the eyes lit up. If I turned in the leader of the Korean independence movement to the military police, that would be still better, he realized and, his heart beating wildly, he walked hurriedly towards the mess hall.

He ordered food prepared and plenty of strong Chinese liquor for the guests, and also a bowlful for each soldier. He looked towards Cha Go Ryun's quarters with a malicious smile. Then he went to Nam Chil, the first platoon leader, and asked him to gather their gang together quietly after supper in the thicket behind the hill. He returned to the mess and went to Cha Go Ryun's place following in the wake of the kitchen police carrying food and liquor.

"This is all we can serve to our distinguished guests; this is a foreign land and we are very poor. But I can assure you the wine won't run out. Let us raise our cups with open hearts this evening. Ha, ha,..."

Saying this Cha Go Ryun edged up to the liquor table. After several drinks he was bursting with indignation all that was pent up in his heart, while Pyo Bom Su rose and went out unremarked. He looked round and then moved quickly towards the hill.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at Cha Go Ryun with a bleeding heart. Glaring his bloodshot eyes focussed at a point up in the air Cha Go Ryun recited a poem.

The autumn is deep in this watery country
Startled by the cold wind the geese fly into the sky.
I toss on the bed painfully in this wakeful night
As a waning moon plays on the sword on the wall.

"These stanzas by Prince Chungmu (Li Sun Sin, the famous Korean admiral who harassed the invading Japanese navy with his turtle-shaped iron-clad boats—*Tr.*) reflect his burning patriotism. How deeply it touches our hearts!"

Cha Go Ryun looked over at his sword hanging on the opposite wall. His bloodshot eyes were dim with tears, which looked like drops of blood. Kim Hyong Jik's heart was also full. Wielding that famous sword Commander Cha used to go through hills and fields and hit out at the Jap aggressors. It made Kim Hyong Jik's heart sore to think that Cha Go Ryun unable to find the right road should finally be driven to such a plight.

But he was happy to find patriotic loyalty still lingering in Commander Cha's heart, even now in his despair. At Linkiang and at Won Dong Yu's unit they had said that Commander Cha was completely depraved, but he had himself not believed it in his heart. He hardened his resolve to save Cha Go Ryun and his troops from Pyo Bom Su's evil hands.

"But, Commander Cha, there is a poem which goes like this, I remember.

My sword on the wall weeps and blood in my heart boils.
My arms firm and strong itch to deal blows days and nights.
O, tell me, time, when wilt thou come."

Kim Hyong Jik recited the stanzas in an even tone, without

raising his voice.

"That's right. Quite right.... But, oh Mr. Kim, when will that time come? Have we not missed it, let it go? Now all we can hope for is a miracle, but when, oh when?"

"No, Commander Cha, we mustn't wait for a miracle, we will create it if we have to."

"Create it? But opportunity depends on God's will, and we lost His time. So how can we create it?"

Cha Go Ryun stared at Kim Hyong Jik, doubt and astonishment mingling on his face.

"It is not God's will; we have an old saying: people's mind, Heaven's mind. The history of all ages and all countries shows that many emperors and heroes held power under what they called God's will, but they have never kept their power very long against the people's will. So what they call God's will or fortune does not simply come from God; it exists in the acts and will of our people, of our independence crusaders, does it not?"

"Yes, that is true."

Cha Go Ryun could not but agree completely with Kim Hyong Jik's logical argument.

"Then we must bring forward that time."

"Mr. Kim, even if Heaven's will depends on people's will, can we bring the time forward at our will? Particularly in the present situation where we have been thrown into the deepest abyss of all time?"

Cha Go Ryun looked doubtful. Kim Hyong Jik stared hard at Cha Go Ryun for a moment in a pensive mood before he replied.

"It is the law of nature that the hardest winter must give way to spring. But human society is transformed by human efforts, is it not? If man builds up his strength and hurries on the opportunity, all will be right. Even though we are at the bottom of the deepest abyss, we will be able to soar up out into the world of light once we independence fighters closely united and firm as a rock find the right way. We will rouse the whole nation so that they come out to bring all their forces into play at once as one man. Yes?"

Cha Go Ryun gazed at Kim Hyong Jik without a word; you could not tell whether he was trying to grasp the meaning of what Kim Hyong Jik had said or to probe something in his own heart. After a while Cha Go Ryun spoke, looking rather still.

"What you have said is correct. But I must say a few words because you did seem to be referring to merger."

"Ha, ha,... It's not what I actually had in mind, but go ahead and tell me, if you please."

"I too am not so narrow-minded as to oppose a merger. I even advocate it myself. Any three-year old child could see that it is necessary. But how and who with whom in the present situation? Where in this wide province of Chientao is there an organization or a leader who has the policy or ability to unite the independence movement? There isn't one. Those who are advocating merger now are aiming at hegemony, not at unity. Take Won Dong Yu for example. They say he has built up his unit with your support. However, could we really lead the independence movement in the right direction, if we merged with Won Dong Yu's unit? Won Dong Yu used to be with my unit, but he left. In spite of our earnest advice he seceded from us and, now that he has become stronger, he proposes a merger. What's in his mind? His position is little different from Sim Hong Jin and Kim Ryong Chon's. They are all ambitious, and were we to get together, no merger would come out of it. We did have several meetings, but our views and doctrines were at variance and all the meetings ended in squabbles. That is how matters stand, Mr. Kim, and I see no way of saving the situation. As for myself, I decided that this was no time just to sit and lament; that I had better fight a decisive battle. So once I launched a reckless battle in which I lost more than half my unit, and here I am, in this sorry plight. Once you are on the decline, you cannot turn the tide, you know. I lost Staff Officer Kang, who was my right hand, several excellent platoon leaders and many good men, and there have also been deserters.... Now Cha Go Ryun's days are numbered. But, Mr. Kim, one thing I can assure you of—I will not die in my bed."

Cha Go Ryun's eyes had a pathetic glint. Then suddenly he burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha. Oh, what an idle complaint I'm making! Well, now, Mr. Kim! Let us stop bitter words. I was told that you are so very well versed in writing. Would you please compose a good poem or two for me, sir?" Cha Go Ryun pleaded, in his awkward endeavour to change the subject.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at him gravely and Cha winced.

"Commander Cha, I'm afraid the wine has weakened you."

Cha Go Ryun was dumbfounded.

"Why, how dare you say that?" he shouted, his eyes flashed. Hong Jun Gol who had been seated by Kim Hyong Jik was strained. But Kim Hyong Jik remained calm as ever.

"Where is the famous General Cha Go Ryun who used to have such spirit and patriotic fervour, who commanded an army hitting hard at the Japs? Is it all that is left of him the Commander Cha who laments despairing in his cups?" Kim Hyong Jik's tone was frigid. Cha Go Ryun was overwhelmed and his eyes opened wide.

"Why, you are so rough-spoken...." Cha Go Ryun could not complete the words that were on the tip of his tongue.

"Yes, I will speak out. I read your appeal: '...If you have lost your country, you might as well be dead. You are humiliated; you don't even have a strip of land to be buried in when you die. Rise up, fellow countrymen! Come out, raise your banners, your swords and spears and fight to the last ditch, the last blade of grass that is alive in this land....'

"Commander, where did you lose your spirit?"

"What do you mean, lose? Why do you talk like that? My heart burns with loyalty; if there is a way to win back our country, I am ready to dedicate my life. But there is no strategy that can achieve it all. You talk in such a manner because I don't join hands with Won Dong Yu?"

Cha Go Ryun glared and struck his broad chest with his fist. However, Kim Hyong Jik stared at Cha full in the face, with a still sharper look. His face was a trifle flushed.

"You are hidebound. You jump up at the word merger. What on earth is so frightening you about a merger?" Kim Hyong Jik was merciless. Cha Go Ryun could not answer right out.

"But I didn't come here to advise you to merge your forces. And moreover, Commander Cha, I'm not visiting you to drink wine or to recite poems. With your units in its present situation, Commander Cha, you are in any case in no position to discuss a merger."

"Why, what's wrong with my unit?" Cha Go Ryun asked, breathless and excited.

"I visited you because as a colleague who has launched out independence fighting to liberate the country, I couldn't shut my eyes to the fact that you and your unit are in imminent danger of total destruction," said Kim Hyong Jik resolutely. He

had decided that nothing short of a hard blow like this would awake Cha Go Ryun.

"Danger of destruction?"

The blow was so sudden that Cha Go Ryun stared at him, wide-eyed.

"Please come to your senses, Commander Cha. Your unit is playing into the hands of evil characters."

Hong Jun Gol who had been looking indignantly at Cha Go Ryun, uttered, edging up to him; he could not remain silent.

"In the hands of evil characters?"

Cha Go Ryun looked blank and turned to Hong Jun Gol.

"A traitor has got your unit in his grip, sir." Hong Jun Gol stated it as a fact.

Cha Go Ryun stared at Hong Jun Gol like a lost soul, and then burst out peals of laughter. He laughed loudly, jerking up his head and said with an ugly frown.

"Don't talk such nonsense even in a jest. How dare you say that, even though Cha Go Ryun is at his lowest ebb?"

"This is a poor joke."

Kim Hyong Jik interjected in a grim tone of voice.

"A poor joke? Then let me hear your views."

Cha Go Ryun looked uneasy.

At this moment there were footsteps outside, the door rattled open and Pyo Bom Su came in.

"Oh, is that you, Staff Officer Pyo? You came just in the right time. Listen to these gentlemen. They claim that a traitor is holding our unit in his grip," said Cha Go Ryun, pleased to see Pyo.

"What? A traitor, sir?"

This stunned Pyo Bom Su who had just sat down beside Cha Go Ryun.

"Yes."

Kim Hyong Jik glanced over at Pyo. His eyes were stern and piercing. Hong Jun Gol sat rigidly erect, casting a wrathful look at Pyo Bom Su.

"I'm glad you are here. I think we need some straight talking. Look, Mr. Pyo Bom Su!" said Hong Jun Gol firmly and Pyo Bom Su flinched as he looked at him, while Cha Go Ryun watched the latter quizzically.

"Show yourself in your true colours!"

"What do you mean by true colours? What the hell do you...."

Pyo Bom Su's face quivered spasmodically. He half sprang to his feet, then thought better of it, and trying not to betray his confusion, said.

"You had better refrain from this kind of joke."

Confusion had already escaped from Pyo's face, which wore an icy expression now.

"Pyo Bom Su, stop trying to make believe. Answer my question. I'm asking you where you are from and what you have done, and for what purpose you joined Cha Go Ryun's unit!"

Hong Jun Gol's tone was stern and furious. Pyo Bom Su's face turned pale with fear. He turned to look at Kim Hyong Jik, but when he met his penetrating eyes and saw his look of disdain, became still more disconcerted.

"Why, who do you think I am? Commander Cha here and the whole independence movement in Chientao knows about me. Why do you ask me such questions? Under whose authority are you asking me such insolent questions?"

Pyo Bom Su spoke firmly and furiously turning to Cha Go Ryun as if seeking agreement, although Cha seemed to be at a loss.

"You are duty bound to answer. When you join the ranks of the independence movement you should identify yourself. And you should have disclosed several things; First, that you were staff officer of a unit of the Righteous Volunteers Army in Chungchong Province, which you fled with 5,000 *won* out of their military funds; and that while crossing the Amnok-gang you were arrested by the Japs and thrown into Sinuiju prison. Second, that you were sentenced to ten years' penal servitude but released in less than three years. You then wandered round Chientao with three subordinates and God knows where they were from, before you joined Cha Go Ryun's unit. Third, that since you joined this unit Staff Officer Kang and many other members of this unit were sent on missions into the homeland, and all were captured crossing the border and all were executed by the Jap army and police, while you and your lot took up major posts in the unit. Now you must clarify these three points."

As soon as Hong Jun Gol finished his scathing interrogation, Cha Go Ryun jumped to his feet, saucer-eyed.

"Is it true, Staff Officer Pyo? Tell the truth this minute!"

He sprang up to the wall and grabbed his sword, glaring

at Pyo Bom Su with fiery eyes. His face as white as a sheet, Pyo Bom Su scowled at Commander Cha and Kim Hyong Jik, and sprang to his feet, drawing his pistol out of the wooden holster on his side.

"Hands up!"

Pyo Bom Su cried out. But, at this moment, Pyo's pistol dropped on the floor simultaneously with "A son of a bitch!" Hong Jun Gol was on his feet his pistol aimed at the back of Pyo's head. Kim Hyong Jik remained seated as calmly as before.

Cha Go Ryun stood blankly for a time. Pyo Bom Su wriggled before rising to his feet. But, as he saw the muzzle of the pistol levelled at his nose, he stepped back, saying, "This is a bloody lie, Commander. This is Won Dong Yu's trick to tear our unit apart. We must arrest them." Pyo Bom Su shouted this angrily.

Cha Go Ryun's long face which had been staring hard at him began to twitch. His thick grayish eyebrows stood up, and with a groan, he whipped out the sword.

"You dirty dog!" His blue blade flashed and flew into the air.

"Ah!"

Even before the cry ended Pyo Bom Su fell back.

"Commander Cha!" Kim Hyong Jik called sternly. Cha Go Ryun jerked and stopped driving the sword down. Kim Hyong Jik rose to his feet slowly and went to Cha Go Ryun. In a calm voice, he advised.

"Don't raise an uproar yet. We'll have to take his lackeys. Leave him to us and act quickly."

Only then Cha Go Ryun came to and took his wooden holster off the wall, slung it across his shoulder and hurried out. A little later Cha came back with a few of his men. He had Pyo Bom Su tied and gagged before he was carried out. Cha Go Ryun gave one of his platoon leaders about the names of Pyo's subordinates and of the soldiers Pyo had recruited later, and instructed him to arrest them all suddenly and simultaneously. Then he posted two sentries at his quarters where Kim Hyong Jik was staying, while he himself went out with the platoon leader.

Veteran though he was, Cha Go Ryun's heart and hands shook beyond control. What a horrible catastrophe had been visited on him!

At Pyo Bom Su's quarters Cha Go Ryun and seven or eight soldiers waited for Pyo's lackeys—some platoon and squad leaders—to come in for a rendezvous.

When they came Cha Go Ryun told his men to aim their guns at the conspirators point-blank and to disarm them. The rest of Pyo's lackeys spread around the platoon were arrested easily. Only one man who was supposed to be with the fifth platoon was at large. Cha Go Ryun had the arrested whipped. Having heard their confessions Cha was so astonished again that he almost fell over.

He staggered out of Pyo Bom Su's quarters. It was dark outside, there was neither the moon nor the stars. He could barely hold up his own body. He tottered to a big tree in the yard and held on to the trunk and looked up into the black sky. Oh, what a terrible tragedy was going to unfold before his eyes! His blood ran cold as he fancied his whole troop disarmed and himself bound tightly and herded across the Amnok-gang, and his miserable self kicked about and trodden down by the Japs. Cha Go Ryun, what the hell is the matter with you? he asked to himself. What the hell were you doing when the Jap agents were taking over your unit? You were causing the death of not only your own worthless self but also many of your men. How can you live on and face yourself under this sky?

The hot tears trickled down the cheeks of Cha Go Ryun who was staring into the dark sky. Though his unit had been saved from the imminent destruction, Cha Go Ryun realized that he could no longer live in this world, brazenly leading his troops. There is no other way but to kill myself, he thought. He felt the wooden holster at his side and took out the revolver. The metal thing was as cold as death itself. He pulled the lock and brought up the revolver slowly.

At this moment he saw Kim Hyong Jik's image, that great personality, so gentle and noble, yet so magnanimous and intelligent. What sort of man is he? Cha Go Ryun wondered only now, though he had talked with him for hours that night. In the teeth of danger, in the face of fearful catastrophe he came to see me and rescued my unit. To come all the way here into the jaws of death to save me who is an utterly degenerate! He has never even met me before, I am a complete stranger to him. Cha Go Ryun recalled what Kim Hyong Jik said.

"Where did you lose your high spirit and patriotic fervour?..."

"I visited you because as a colleague who has launched out independence fighting to liberate the country, I couldn't shut my eyes to the fact that you and your unit are in imminent danger of total destruction...."

His earnest tone of voice still rang clearly in his ears. How broad-minded and tolerant he is! Cha Go Ryun thought. He has such a warm, kind heart that he came to the aid of this Cha Go Ryun whom everybody else discards like a frayed shirt. It occurred to him that the other day he had read Won Dong Yu's letter that referred to Kim Hyong Jik and said that now they had a leader to whom they could trust the destiny of the independence movement. Since nowadays everybody claimed to be a leader, Cha Go Ryun had just ignored Won Dong Yu's words. Only now those passages in Won's letter came back to him.

Now Cha Go Ryun felt he had not the face to meet Kim Hyong Jik.

Shall I kill myself conscientiously, without seeing him? he asked to himself. Or shall I first thank him and entrust my unit to him?

Cha Go Ryun hesitated for a while, looking over at his quarters where Kim Hyong Jik was. The light shone through the window. Now he decided that it was his duty as a man to see Kim Hyong Jik once, however ashamed he felt. He moved slowly towards the light.

"Is that Commander Cha?"

Somebody asked from the opposite direction. It was Kim Hyong Jik's aide. Commander Cha stopped hesitantly.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik says he would like to see you briefly before leaving."

"Leaving?!" exclaimed Cha Go Ryun surprised.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik says it's fortunate that the situation has been saved, and now he wants to leave."

Cha Go Ryun was disconcerted.

"No, he mustn't. I was going to see him now.... Let's go."

Commander Cha cantered along. But, in front of the door through which the light was shining out, Cha Go Ryun halted as if petrified. Hong Jun Gol went in first, announcing the arrival of Commander Cha Go Ryun, but the latter would not move and stayed out by the door. He was too ashamed to go in.

Expressing his great satisfaction Kim Hyong Jik came to the door, and only then Cha Go Ryun made up his mind and went in quickly. So soon as he was in the room Cha Go Ryun bowed and prostrated himself, putting his hands on the floor, palms downwards.

"Mr. Kim!"

He could not utter another word, and his shoulders were heaving. Kim Hyong Jik was confused and hastily raised Commander Cha up by his shoulders.

"What's the matter, Commander?"

"Mr. Kim, you came all the way to this dangerous place... to save such a rotten fellow as I...."

Cha Go Ryun muttered in a quivering voice; he watched Kim Hyong Jik, without wiping the tears that streamed down his cheeks.

"Calm down, please. It's lucky your unit was saved. Oh, please do calm yourself."

Kim Hyong Jik was embarrassed and comforted the commander.

"I thank you. You are too...."

Cha Go Ryun could not calm himself down for quite a while. Then he wiped his face with his sleeves and pulled himself together, took a few steps backward and, looking eagerly at Kim Hyong Jik, spoke quietly.

"I have one earnest request to make, sir."

"Go ahead and tell me."

Cha Go Ryun hesitated before he added.

"I'm leaving the unit right away."

"Leaving? Whatever for, Commander?"

Kim Hyong Jik was surprised and stared at him.

"Please hear me out, sir. I'm no longer worthy to take part in the independence movement or to command an armed force. And since I have reduced this unit to the plight it's in today, how can I live on under this sky, leading soldiers? So, before leaving, I would like to make one big request to you...."

Cha Go Ryun pursed up his lips for a time and continued.

"I have committed great crimes to our forefathers and compatriots, but my men are not to blame. They left their

parents, wives and children at their homes, and are in an alien land thousands of miles away from their own villages. Their hearts were full of patriotic, loyal determination to free their country even at the cost of their lives. So, I wish, Mr. Kim, you would use your good offices to enable our men to join in Won Dong Yu's unit or any other units you may think fit. This is my last, earnest wish...."

Kim Hyong Jik, who had silently watched Cha Go Ryun's pathetic expression, went up to the latter with a pitiful look. And he held Cha's hands in his own.

"Commander, where do you think you would go? Why are you still being so hidebound and stupid?... Our independence movement has taken a thorny path on which many setbacks await, as well as successes; many bloody battles, maybe death. You are well aware of this, Commander, for you have been through many vicissitudes already. And now you flinch before a thing like this. You are utterly wrong."

Kim Hyong Jik's hands grasping Cha Go Ryun's were warm. Cha Go Ryun's heart had a pricking sensation and his tears flowed freely, but he reiterated his wish to Kim Hyong Jik.

"My crime was too great, sir. I left my unit in enemy hands...."

Kim Hyong Jik shook Cha's hands firmly. The latter felt as if his heart and whole body were being shaken.

"However great your crime, it is far smaller than your crime would be, were you to give up the fight for independence and throw your country and your brothers' destiny overboard."

Kim Hyong Jik's voice was scathing and his eyes flashed feverishly.

"Throwing overboard?"

Cha Go Ryun's heart was frozen. Kim Hyong Jik's words "The crime of throwing overboard the destinies of the country, of our brothers" rang in his ears again and again. How then should I do? he thought. I can't die or live....

"What shall I do, sir?"

Cha Go Ryun made an agonizing cry.

"Commander, let us sit and talk quietly. Let's discuss ways and means of building up the unit. Let's contrive methods to build it up into a far better unit even than it used to be."

Cha Go Ryun just kept watching Kim Hyong Jik whose kindness was unbounded and confidence unlimited.

"Well, let's sit down."

Kim Hyong Jik pulled Cha Go Ryun's hand.

"I was told you are leaving, Mr. Kim?" Sitting opposite Kim Hyong Jik, Cha Go Ryun asked uneasily.

"I'll stay for a few days until you have given up the idea of leaving your unit, Commander Cha." Kim Hyong Jik laughed softly. Cha Go Ryun smiled awkwardly and his face went red.

The light reflected all the night through on the window of Cha Go Ryun's room, in which Kim Hyong Jik's tranquil voice flowed. For three consecutive days Kim Hyong Jik had lived under one roof with Cha Go Ryun, teaching him a great deal; he began with an analysis of the situation at home and abroad and went on to the doctrine and policies of the KNA. Cha Go Ryun had thought he had some solid views of his own on the Korean independence movement, but now he had to admit his own ignorance and he took his hat off to Kim Hyong Jik. Finally they discussed how to get Cha Go Ryun's unit out of its present chaos and to expand and strengthen it.

On the early morning of the fourth day six men on horseback appeared on the road in front of the sentry post. Kim Hyong Jik rode in front abreast of Cha Go Ryun, followed by Hong Jun Gol and an escort of three soldiers. They were on their way to Won Dong Yu's unit.

Cha Go Ryun looked up with a thousand emotions at the far mountain ridges across the Amnok-gang. His eyes, which had been bloodshot and lack-luster, shone serenely now, and his shapely beard stirred in the morning breeze. He felt physically and mentally reborn.

Won Dong Yu's unit had heard the news and many of their people waited anxiously for Kim Hyong Jik, with other independence fighters who had come from Linkiang and Chunggang.

Kim Hyong Jik stayed several days, forming KNA organizations and teaching how to expand and strengthen them. He assigned Won Dong Yu and Cha Go Ryun with the task of working together to set up a school to train workers of the independence movement and military cadres. He promised

them to pick out good youths and send them to the school.

It was the kind of moonlit night that made you feel that spring had come at last even to distant Chientao. Won Dong Yu, Cha Go Ryun and other comrades came to the riverbank with its rustling reeds, to see Kim Hyong Jik off. At the waterside under the moonlight stood Chon Yong Tae and a boatman who had come over in his boat to fetch Kim Hyong Jik.

Kim Hyong Jik stood facing Cha Go Ryun and Won Dong Yu on the embankment, gripped in deep emotions. He was carrying their good wishes with him, and great hopes. If these two units husbanded their strength properly and worked in close coordination, it would have great influence on the independence movement in the whole border areas.

"Well, then, I'll go over there. If you consult together in every matter and support each other in your activities, I'm sure that nothing is impossible for you. When I go home, I, too, will do my level best to help you." Kim Hyong Jik talked tranquilly to the two commanders.

"Don't worry, sir. Now that we have you, and also have the clear-cut doctrine and rules of the KNA, there will be no uncoordinated action and no problem that cannot be settled. We will consult on everything and support each other." Cha Go Ryun spoke confidently.

"I sure will meet your expectations, sir," said Won Dong Yu.

"But how can you now travel a thousand *ri*? You have not had a moment's respite here, you've had to deal with one problem after another."

Cha Go Ryun was worried as he looked across to the far mountain ranges.

"You needn't worry. Hiking is my hobby now." Kim Hyong Jik said cheerfully and laughed until the others joined in.

Kim Hyong Jik held their hands.

"I wish you a safe journey."

"I wish you good health."

Kim Hyong Jik strode down to the waterside. Hong Jun Gol exchanged the words of parting with the people, and followed Kim Hyong Jik.

The sound of waves hitting the sides of the boat and

the creaking scull receded. Cha Go Ryun and Won Dong Yu stood motionless on the embankment where the reeds were swaying. Presently a light flickered on a hillock on the far side of the river, signalling the safe arrival of Kim Hyong Jik. Won Dong Yu and Cha Go Ryun smiled at each other.

"Let us support Mr. Kim Hyong Jik and join hands to fight!"

Cha Go Ryun was the first to speak and to offer his hand.

"Yes, let's, Commander Cha!"

Won Dong Yu answered his voice trembling with emotion, as he gripped Cha Go Ryun's hand.

4

The south-bound train was scheduled to pass the north-bound train at Pyongyang station at five thirty in the morning. The two trains which had run throughout the night pulled in gasping at almost the same instant.

Holding the skirts of his white ramie *turumagi* by one hand and a huge bundle wrapped in a dark cloth by the other, Maeng Gyong Jae alighted on the platform. As the two trains had arrived at the same time the station was congested. For a time he stood vacantly with the bundle in his hand. It was refreshing outside.

The humid heat had almost suffocated him in the train, and the howling of baby had hit his ears so hard that it was still beating at his eardrums. His coach had been packed with refugees from Cholla Province going to West Chientao.

Tattered clothes, bloated yellow faces, gourd ladles hanging from the racks; the baby had waken up and whimpered and the mother had given it her breast; for a minute the emaciated baby had held the nipple and sucked for dear life, at the empty breast but soon it gave up and burst out crying; the woman had tried hard to soothe the baby, but she had been exhausted and stared blankly at the wailing creature; the eyes in her swollen yellowish face dim with tears....

All these scenes were still gnawing into Maeng Gyong Jae's heart. A passer-by pushed past him, and Maeng Gyong Jae came to, and started walking. Carrying his big head erect, he walked briskly. The morning was already breaking fair.

In front of the station Maeng Gyong Jae felt instinctly that somebody was following him. It was a sturdy fellow of medium build with a decent-looking moustache in plain Korean clothes and a straw hat; he was following Maeng Gyong Jae, and watching him with unusually glittering eyes.

Maeng Gyong Jae was worried. Who could the fellow be, he wondered. Perhaps a plain-clothes cop?

Maeng Gyong Jae was thoughtful, knitting his wide brows. Anyhow I'll have to lose him, throw him off the scent, he thought. He quickened his pace, dived into the crowd ahead and then turned nimbly into an alleyway.

Now nobody was behind. Maeng Gyong Jae heaved a sigh of relief, pushed up the hat that had been pulled down to his eyes and walked on. He covered some distance when the same fellow suddenly appeared out of a side-street. Maeng Gyong Jae stopped short in spite of himself. But the man came up to him briskly, grinned and blurted out. "Mr. Maeng, it's me."

"Who's me?"

The voice was familiar but he could not place the man.

"Hong Jun Gol."

"Are you really Brother Hong?"

It surely was Hong Jun Gol's voice. The other day Maeng Gyong Jae had been told that Hong was skilled at disguises, and clearly he was. Then he had looked like an ordinary peasant, but now he was dressed smartly like a scholar, even to the moustaches.

The two men had a good laugh as they greeted each other again. Hong Jun Gol had just come in on a north-bound train on his way back from secret mission and was going to Kangdong to see Kim Hyong Jik. They dropped into the marketplace at Kyongjae-ri and took two bowls of red-bean porridge each, then they crossed Karugae Pass and took the short-cut through Hungbudong, and by sunrise they came out into the road that runs through the plain, from where they could see the Hapjang-gyo Bridge.

From here on they could talk completely at ease.

"Well, where have you been, Brother Hong? I thought you were working at Songchon...."

As Maeng Gyong Jae asked, Hong Jun Gol broke into a smile, and pulling up the bundle he had snatched from Maeng and carried on his shoulder, he answered.

"Oh, I've just been to Antung," said Hong as nonchalantly as if he had been to a neighbour's down the road.

"Antung?"

Maeng looked surprised.

"I met the young men that you sent there from Seoul, sir."

"You did? Are they all right there?"

"Yes, I sent them all onto Cha Go Ryun's unit."

"Did you? Was that the purpose of your journey?"

"Yes, sir. Sometime ago I received a message from Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, asking me to come to Naedong with Chu Pung."

Hong Jun Gol explained roughly what had happened. Having received the message, Hong Jun Gol had gone to Naedong with Chu Pung, and Kim Hyong Jik had instructed them to pick out ten of the young people they had trained and take them to Uiju. There they had been supposed to collect up the young men sent from different places and send them across the river to Antung to Won Dong Yu and Cha Go Ryun's units, and they had been told that at a certain hotel at Antung they would meet Chon Yong Tae and Kim Sok Ha disguised as merchants. Kim Sok Ha was expected to bring weapons, which Hong Jun Gol was to repack to look like ordinary merchandise, and pass on to Chon Yong Tae who would take it to West Chientao together with youngmen before he returned home.

Kim Hyong Jik had asked Commander Chu Pung if he were willing to act as staff officer to Cha Go Ryun's unit, for Commander Cha Go Ryun had asked him to recommend an officer time and again. Chu Pung was glad that he had agreed immediately. Kim Hyong Jik had told him that he need not worry about his family as they would be sent later, and eagerly advised him to assist Commander Cha well in building up his unit.

"You have been on a big mission, then, did everything go well?" asked Maeng Gyong Jae with a look full of envy and astonishment.

"Yes, Mr. Maeng. I was impressed deeply by these tough

youths gathered from different places and the guns our comrades had obtained abroad." Hong Jun Gol answered, well satisfied. Maeng Gyong Jae too felt very happy. Hong Jun Gol added.

"I hadn't seen Brother Kim Sok Ha for a long time. He said he wanted to get a glimpse of Korea and proposed to go up Jinjangshan in Antung and I accompanied him. We talked for hours about Mr. Kim on that hill and about our own activity to date. I was greatly touched, indeed, to look across to the distant mountains and rivers in the homeland. After looking over at them for a long time Brother Sok Ha said that the pulse of our KNA organizations beat forcefully in many parts of the homeland and abroad and it seemed even to be vibrating in his body, you know."

"He may well feel that way." Maeng Gyong Jae nodded his big head.

"I felt the same way. But it was a feeling, more profound, different from that I had when we founded the KNA. I had a conviction that if only we build up the KNA the way Kim Hyong Jik suggests, nothing will be impossible; even though I am not that clever, I thought I more or less understood why Mr. Kim had tried to strengthen the KNA like the pine tree that is rooted deep in the ground. I can vividly see our independence movement moving ahead since the foundation of the KNA."

"I have exactly the same feeling now, Brother Hong, though we are barely fluttering above the ground, and it is as difficult for us to grasp Mr. Kim's great aim completely, as to catch the roc when it flies away in the sky for thousands and thousands of miles."

"It is, indeed."

The two men walked on silently, each thinking his own thought.

"Mr. Maeng, what is this bundle?" Hong Jun Gol asked abruptly.

"Why, is it heavy? Here, let me take it."

"Not at all. But there seem to be some books in it...."

"Ha, ha, ha. They are nothing special. They are some of the books printed at our own printing press and some books Mr. Kim asked for. There is one very precious book among them."

"What is it?"

"I showed the national reader compiled by Mr. Kim to the comrades in Seoul. And all of them were of the opinion that we should print large quantities at our press for distribution to all community schools across the nation. Many comrades helped to raise funds for it, and the distribution has been completed. I brought a few copies to present to Mr. Kim Hyong Jik," said Maeng Gyong Jae, proudly.

"You did a very useful job. So our 'commerce' is going well in Seoul as well?"

"It is. Since Mr. Kim helped us on his last visit, it has been doing quite well."

Maeng Gyong Jae was remembering Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's visit last year.

They got to the street in Maekjon late in the afternoon. They stopped at a tavern for a bite, before they took a cart-road to Mt. Ponghwa-san.

The two went straight to Mr. Kim's, but he was not at home. His wife told them that he had gone to Chungbami to help the villagers weed their maize fields after school. She asked the visitors to wait, saying she would go and fetch him.

"Oh no, that is not necessary, we'll go ourselves. Mr. Maeng, why don't we go and do some weeding with Mr. Kim?" said Hong Jun Gol, looking over his shoulder at Maeng Gyong Jae.

Maeng Gyong Jae promptly agreed. And though Mrs. Kang Ban Sok tried hard to dissuade them, they picked up hoes from the earthen bank and went.

The area along the Sujong-chon River had just the right climate for maize. Last year Kim Hyong Jik had got some seeds and ploughed a strip of wasteland beside the school and planted maize. He had also given some maize seed to Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and several other villagers to plant. The results had been excellent. The yield had been nearly twice than sorghum or foxtail millet yield. So this year the people in Naedong and at Tongsam-ri had all planted a lot of maize. The families who had had a success with last year's maize planted it after their wheat and barley was cut. Maize grew well this year also. The maize fields were very lush now in the present heat wave.

The maize fields at Chungbami beyond Tongkyon Village were also doing well; the maize stalks, spreading up their leaves thick as banana plants already stood waist-high.

There was an old ash tree just outside the village, and not too far away a spring gushed out of a crack in the rock at the bottom of the hill. The maize had grown well in the 500 to 600 *pyong* wide field near the spring. Seven or eight peasants were weeding each working down one furrow. Despite the heavy humid heat with not a breath of wind under the scorching mid-summer sun, the peasants worked nimbly with their hoes. Bending and straightening up among the freshly green stalks they went ahead, working their implements lightly, each trying to be in the lead. The sweat flowed heavily down their sun-tanned faces, and the muscles of their arms worked. Ho Gi Son's roundish face and Choe Sok Man's oval face were seen among the weeders.

Kim Hyong Jik, in a straw hat, was weeding ahead dexterously in the middle of the field. He scratched the earth widely around a stalk and heaped it up at the base of the stalk and moved over to another in front. He worked carefully but he was so quick that he had left all the other weeders behind.

On the left a little behind him a middle-aged woman with a towel round her head was weeding. Once in a while she stretched herself up and wiped the profuse perspiration off her forehead with the back of her hand, and looked gratefully at Kim Hyong Jik weeding ahead of her, before crouching to work with the hoe. She was a widow and the villagers called her Yu Bok's mother. Her husband had been with the Righteous Volunteers and had been killed in action several years ago. She had a 12-year-old daughter and five-year-old posthumous son; she was a poor woman who farmed with her frail woman's hands and lived from hand to mouth.

Six years ago when she had heard of her husband's tragic death, she had more than once gone to the cliff top above the Yolpa-gang River with her two children. But when her little ones clung to her shrieking with fear, she had felt so pity for them and had been unable to stick to her resolve to kill herself and the children. Now that the children were older she no longer thought of suicide. But as their future looked grimmer and grimmer she herself had cared little for life, just living on with a heart bruised by evils and curses.

None of the peasants in and around Tongsam-ri were well off, and there were a few families living as wretchedly as Yu Bok's, with many mouths to feed but without hands or land.

Last year when the village community guild had been formed, Kim Hyong Jik had explained to the villagers the value of solidarity and mutual assistance, and had advised them to give moral and material help to particularly hardpressed families such as Yu Bok's.

This year Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and some other villagers took upon themselves the job of helping these families with their farming. Thus, from this spring, the members of the village community guild made it a rule not to do their own farm work until they had finished helping these hardpressed families to manure their fields, to plough, sow or weed according to the season. And busy as he was, Kim Hyong Jik would always manage to put in a little time to lead the village community guild in this. Soon this village community guild voluntary service became a custom in the whole area. And as the days went by, it imperceptibly strengthened unity and solidarity among the villagers.

As a result the villagers took in various forms of patriotic enlightenment propaganda spread by Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man, Chong Jin Gu and other active members of the school and village community guilds and the pupils of Myongsin School under Kim Hyong Jik's leadership as dried-up soil soaks up the rain.

Kim Hyong Jik finished his furrow and went to the edge of the field. He wiped his perspiring face with a towel he carried at his side and looked at the other weeders moving ahead, and noticing that Yu Bok's mother who had been working on the furrow next to his was lagging behind the others, he went off and started on her furrow from the other end.

"Good gracious!" Yu Bok's mother rose to her feet, confused. She had not seen him till they almost met. He smiled tenderly and kept working his hoe. The embarrassed woman muttered, "Please stop working, sir, you must be so busy...."

As he finished with the last stalk Kim Hyong Jik straightened up and said, "Don't worry, auntie. Working in the hot sun is good for the appetite and makes life worth living. Ha, ha, ha.... Well, now, let's move on to the next one. We should finish with this field today."

And with these words he walked ahead.

By this time all the others had finished their furrows. They also moved on to the next lot, looking reverently at Kim Hyong Jik. Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man and other activists of the KNA or different guilds were particularly moved to see him. For they knew only too well how very busy he had been. Day in day out revolutionaries were coming to Naedong from all over the country and from abroad for discussions with Kim Hyong Jik and to take further assignments. Pak Yun Hwan of Unryul, Yun Sam of Kyongsang Province, Pang In Su and Cho Pil U of Pyongyang had already been here, and last night Kang Jin Sok had come and the light had been on in Kim Hyong Jik's room all night. But before daylight today the brothers-in-law had parted by Mt. Ponghwa-san, after clasping each other's hands for a long time.

Then Kim Hyong Jik had been to school today as usual and after school he had come over to Chungbami in his straw hat, instead of going home. The people were worried to see him overworking. They feared he might get ill. When visiting comrades such as Hong Jun Gol, Chu Pung and Pak Yun Hwan were leaving, they all asked Ho Gi Son to take good care of Kim Hyong Jik, when they were far away. So, Ho Gi Son kept asking him to take things a bit easier, but in vain. A few days ago, he and Chong Jin Gu had suggested bringing in another teacher to lighten Kim Hyong Jik's load, and told him that as regards village problems, they could take care of them, once he gave instructions to their guild. But he turned down the offer with a smile, saying:

"I'm grateful to you both and other villagers for your loving care for me. But don't worry about me. And another teacher would increase the burden on you all. A man feels his life is worthwhile while he carries a bit of load on his shoulders."

"But your burden is more than a bit, sir. It may be presumptuous of us, but we really do ask you not to worry too much about village affairs, to save your time for the independence movement, for that is more important," said Chong Jin Gu.

"My only worry is that I don't work enough. My load is not excessive. If I can't keep my own village in good shape, how could I talk about the independence movement of the country? Please don't worry so much. It is my obligation as man,

it is a proud aspect of my life to teach the children and discuss village affairs big or small and share their toil and troubles with the people."

Kim Hyong Jik loved the villagers, and the two men, with no further words with which to persuade him, had to give in.

The villagers who had moved over to new furrows after Kim Hyong Jik did their jobs more nimbly.

When they had worked more than half way two men appeared hoe in hand under the ash tree. They were Hong Jun Gol and Maeng Gyong Jae. They looked across to the weeders for a time.

"Mr. Kim is over there," Hong Jun Gol told Maeng Gyong Jae. Maeng just nodded.

"Let's say just hallow and then buckle down to weeding." Hong Jun Gol walked briskly down, and Maeng Gyong Jae hurried after him.

The first to notice the two men was Ho Gi Son who had been working near the corner. He was very pleased and he shouted to Kim Hyong Jik. "Mr. Kim, some guests for you."

Hoe in hand Kim Hyong Jik straightened up and looked over to the two men.

"Why, it's you, Brother Maeng! And you, too, Mr. Hong."

Kim Hyong Jik came over to them, delighted. Hong Jun Gol and Maeng Gyong Jae went to meet him.

"You must be tired after a long journey in this hot sun. Why didn't you rest at my house and send for me, instead of coming here?" said Kim Hyong Jik when the first greetings were over.

"We were told that you had come here, so we thought we'd come too, to work the hoes until our arms get limp, because we haven't done farmwork for a long time," Hong Jun Gol explained.

"Ha, ha, ha. But we shouldn't make our guests weed, should we? And anyway, you, Brother Maeng, have never done this sort of work in your life. Oh well, let's go home."

"No, sir. Let's work a bit before we go," said Maeng Gyong Jae earnestly. Kim Hyong Jik stared at Maeng and said.

"Well, if you insist, we'd better go ahead. Yu Bok's mother, you'll reap a good crop from this field—even our distinguished guests are here to weed it," he laughed.

"I'm awfully sorry but...." Yu Bok's mother was confused

and at a loss for the right words.

The people worked more vigorously. When they had each weeded several furrows, Ho Gi Son's voice rang out across the field: "Time for a break."

They dropped their hoes and left the field to assemble by the spring under the hillock on which the ash tree grew. Water gushed out of this spring all the year round. Yu Bok's mother brought a small gourd, and they drank by turn. All said the water was excellent; one even said it was so cold that it froze their sweat. When they had drunk they went up to sit in the shade of the tree. The ice cold water and sitting in the shade cooled them. The men pulled out their tobacco pouches, rolled their cigarettes and sat blowing the smoke looking down at the maize field. There was not a weed in sight; the earth was built up at the bottom of every stalk and the stalks stood upright and lined up like soldiers, their green fresh leaves rustling.

"Honestly, I'd never have thought that maize would grow this well here in Tongsam-ri. Last year I saw Mr. Kim ploughing and sowing, but I was not at all sure it would thrive," said Choe Sok Man, gazing at the maize field, pipe in hand.

"Nor was I. And when Ho Gi Son suggested planting maize, I was rather wavy. But last year your maize yield was twice as high as the sorghum, wasn't it?" Gomannyo's father's voice sounded rueful. He looked across at Ho Gi Son.

"Well, maybe not quite twice as much but getting on that way. This year I'm sure I'll double the crop," was Ho Gi Son's reply.

Then Choe Sok Man turned to Gomannyo's father and blurted out.

"Brother, you're always too wavy; that's your trouble. What did you do when I asked you to join the school guild? And when we asked you to let Gomannyo go to school? You said what's the use of sending a girl to school? And when we suggested growing maize, again you were wavy. It's a disease with you, this waviness, you know. I fear that you might wave away your life. Brother, you'll have to get over your waviness disease for good while Mr. Kim is with us in our village. Ha, ha, ha."

Choe Sok Man teased, and they all burst out laughing.

Kim Hyong Jik also laughed cheerfully. Scratching the back of his head, Gomannyo's father gave an awkward smile, stuttering, "Why, you, I didn't do such...."

As the laughter subsided an elderly man who lived next door to Yu Bok's at Chungbami said very seriously, his scanty beard quivering: "At any rate, Mr. Kim has brought about a great transformation in the farming at our Naedong village." and everyone nodded in agreement.

"It's only a switch to maize, hardly a great transformation," Kim Hyong Jik said, smiling at the old man.

"No? To us poor peasants every extra kilogramme is a big thing. And our yields will have almost doubled, don't you see?" The old man insisted. But Kim Hyong Jik looked over at the maize field, and said.

"If we owned those fields and could use them as we wish, then we would make a real transformation here at the area of Kangdong."

"A real transformation?"

The old man lifted his beard and stared at Kim Hyong Jik.

"Yes. Look at the fields in front of Chungbami. At present you can grow sorghum, barnyard millet, foxtail millet or at best maize on this poor sterile land, and at that you don't get any yields at all compared with rice. Now if you were to build a dyke in front of this spring and harness the water to turn the fields into paddies, what would you get? You'd harvest three or four times as much as now, and the whole village could eat rice."

"Turn them into paddies?!" Choe Sok Man said, wide-eyed.

"Why not? and raise plenty of fat carps and roaches in the reservoir, so that all the families here could have fish soup. Then this remote village on the riverside would be a really nice place to live in with no worries about food, clothing or housing, using firewood to cook rice and meat soup. That would be a real transformation. What else could it be? And in the mountains in the area of Tongsam-ri," and Kim Hyong Jik pointed to hillsides spreading out from the twin ridges from the summit of Mt. Ponghwa-san, "In those mountains you could plant fruit trees—chestnuts, apples, *Chuihyangro* pears and peaches in plenty for your ragged, hungry children—couldn't you? And that is not all. It would be possible to turn the whole of the Kangdong plain into paddy fields by drawing on the waters of the Yolpa-gang."

Kim Hyong Jik looked across towards the distant Maekjon ferry.

The picture was so fantastic that all eyes followed his, astounded and enthralled.

"It's like a dream," said Choe Sok Man.

"To turn the whole of the Kangdong plain into paddy fields! How would you pump out the water of the Yolpa-gang? If you could set up a huge water wheel on the Yolpa-gang with a giant to tread on it, then it could be done." A youth from Chungbami looked doubtfully at Kim Hyong Jik.

"There really is such a powerful water wheel," Kim Hyong Jik smiled. The young man's eyes looked as if they would pop out of his head.

"Ha, ha, ha. Why, can't you believe it? Of course, you can't pull up the waters of the Yolpa-gang by manpower, but there are instruments to pump up water. They work the same way as a treadwheel, but they're made of iron and are moved by big machines, not hands—they're so strong that they could even pull up the water to the top of the mountain."

"To the top of the mountain?" Again Choe Sok Man looked at Kim Hyong Jik and his eyes were round.

"Well, it was you who told me I was suffering from the worries and now it's you who's wavy of believing. If Mr. Kim says that there is such a machine, there is; you can be sure of that!"

Gomannyo's father chipped in, seeing his chance to get even with Choe Sok Man. "Ha, ha, ha, that's one for you, Choe the Glib." The people again laughed noisily for a good while.

"You don't think that I didn't believe him? I only said it to try your lot out," said Choe the Glib as cunning as ever starting up another peal of laughter, in which Kim Hyong Jik joined them, and then went on:

"In your present situation you could hardly believe it. But once you owned that land, it wouldn't be that difficult. If you pooled your energy and worked hard and built up your living, you could get machines like that."

"Well, think of that!" Choe Sok Man stopped laughing, looked gravely around at the villagers, and then added; "So to cut a long story short, we peasants could find a way out to be well off, but only when we kick those Jap bastards off our land, when we get back our territory, yes?"

"You've hit the nail on the head, man!" Gomannyo's father nodded and agreed.

"The Japs are our enemy."

"How can we sweep out those robbers?" They chipped in one after another.

"As Mr. Kim always says, we mustn't give in, thinking that we are finished, that as mere peasants, we can't do a thing, nor must wait for Heaven to help us to free our country; we must rise up united and do it ourselves, by our own efforts—then we'll be able to beat the Japs—like that," said Ho Gi Son firmly, with enthusiasm.

"Right you are, man. When I was a child, I heard a story from my grandfather. He said that during the Imjin War (Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592—*Tr.*) the whole country was laid waste, and the Japs cut off the people's ears and literally skinned them alive, but in the long run, our fathers kicked the barbarians back to their islands." The old man from Chungbami gave Ho Gi Son a lively look. "Honestly, whether we live or die, we must fight, to restore our country. How could we lie in peace in our graves if we have to hand down this terrible mess to our children and grandchildren?"

"Right. I have pondered over Mr. Kim's teachings, and realized that if even we common folks give in, there will be no one to win back our country, and that would be too terrible."

All of them were serious now.

Kim Hyong Jik looked earnestly at Ho Gi Son, Choe Sok Man and other villagers seated round him before he said.

"This evening I'll start reading a book to you, *The Story of the Imjin War*—at evening classes. Anyone may come and listen, even if they don't go to evening classes."

There was a shout of joy, for the whole neighbourhood knew Kim Hyong Jik was a great storyteller.

"Well, then, let's buckle down and hurry up with the work, and go to the night school in the evening!"

Ho Gi Son shouted, raising the hoe in hand and everybody followed suit.

5

They finished weeding Yu Bok's maize field towards dusk.

Maeng Gyong Jae and Hong Jun Gol accompanied Kim Hyong Jik home and sat down to the supper his wife had carefully prepared, foxtail millet, but mixed with fresh green peas, which were very appetizing, and flavoured bean-paste soup, fresh pickled radish, raw chillies with red-pepper paste. A look at it was enough to give the two men an appetite. They used often to come to eat at Mangyongdae, but this was their first visit in many months.

As always, they found that when Kang Ban Sok did the cooking any food tasted wonderful.

The two enjoyed their supper with Kim Hyong Jik.

After supper they talked desultorily for a while. Kim Hyong Jik asked after their families and about the comrades in their areas. Then he suggested they should retire early and rest while he went to teach the evening class.

But the two men would not rest. They always felt comfortable and quite at home at Kim Hyong Jik's, the way a son feels in his father's house when he comes home after years living among strangers. They would prefer to report on their work when he came back, and to be given new assignments.

As the bell rang, the schoolhouse buzzed as on a festive occasion with villagers gathering in. Presently all was quiet—the lesson seemed to have begun. The two comrades went outside. The light shone brightly through open classroom doors. Right in the middle of the large room surrounded by men and women, young and old, Kim Hyong Jik was reading *The Story of the Imjin War.*

Before they knew it, the two men were also attracted by his fluent reading and sat down on the earthen bank under the eaves.

After school the villagers scattered noisily in all directions in the threes and fours.

Kim Hyong Jik put out the light and was coming out of the classroom, and when he saw the two comrades in the yard, he stopped.

"Why didn't you rest? You must be very tired after your long journey."

Hong Jun Gol grinned and said:

"Do you think we came here to sleep, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha. Of course not. Well, then, shall we take a walk along a cool field path?"

"Let's, sir. Here in the country I feel like reviving, my lungs seem to be expanding now I'm away from the jostling streets of Seoul," said Maeng Gyong Jae, looking across to the distant plain.

The three men walked leisurely towards Maekjon ferry.

Hong Jun Gol made his report first; and Kim Hyong Jik was very satisfied with the results of Hong's mission. Then Maeng Gyong Jae told him about the situation in Seoul. He gave details about the KNA's increasing membership among patriots, youth and students, particularly among the workers in many of the factories. Lastly, he said that Governor-General Hasegawa had appointed a fellow named Watanabe, notorious for his brutality, as Superintendent-General of the Police, and added that last month this Watanabe had had more than 120 innocent patriots awaiting trial at the Seoul prison tortured to death; the torturers had hacked their limbs with swords, driven nails into their bodies, thrown each of them into a small box which was kicked down the slope. Maeng Gyong Jae gritted his teeth while narrating this torture which would have made even beasts ashamed to witness.

Kim Hyong Jik, who had been walking slowly, listening to the story, came to a halt. He looked at the plain bathed in a dim moonlight shining through thin clouds. Suddenly he turned to the two comrades.

"I have also heard about that. And still more atrocious stories. Brother Maeng, now is the time for us to strike hard at the backs of their heads so that their eyes pop from their sockets." Kim Hyong Jik's eyes looked like blue flames of rage.

"Mr. Kim!" Hong Jun Gol cried out and stepped forward in spite of himself. Maeng Gyong Jae's eyes lit up as he too went up to Kim Hyong Jik.

"On National Humiliation Day we are going to make a big attack. They are puffed up and running wild; they think they have swallowed up Korea now. Let's hit them hard and make them spit blood!" said Kim Hyong Jik grimly, clenching his fists. The two men had never seen such a look on Kim Hyong Jik's face—usually it was mild like a spring wind and benevolent as the ocean.

"We have been waiting for that, sir. Please give us our orders."

Deeply excited, Hong Jun Gol appeared to be ready to

leap into the enemy position, the moment Kim Hyong Jik gave the order.

"The comrades in Seoul are also waiting anxiously for battle." Maeng Gyong Jae's voice trembled though he endeavoured to suppress the surging excitement in his heart.

"I understand. Let us sit down here and discuss it." Kim Hyong Jik said and went over to a patch of grass beside the path. "The protest meeting at Pyongyang, the struggle at Songchon against the Japanese tobacco monopoly law, and scattering handbills in Seoul—these will be the harbinger of our fight this time."

Hong Jun Gol was too excited to speak out; his throat felt hoarse.

"One battle will follow after another at different places until autumn. There will be protest meetings, lectures, and appeals. Diverse forms of struggle will be conducted to suit the conditions of different areas."

Kim Hyong Jik spoke quietly, controlling his excitement and keeping the pitch down.

"Now, tell us what we should do, Mr. Kim." Maeng Gyong Jae entreated.

Hong Jun Gol was too excited even to speak, only his eyes shone fiercely.

"We'll have a discussion," said Kim Hyong Jik, and for a time looked silently at Hong Jun Gol. He saw Hong's chest heaving even in the dark. Kim Hyong Jik smiled faintly.

"Mr. Hong, you seem to want to rush ahead with a drawn sword, but our struggle this time isn't of that kind. So calm down and listen to me carefully."

Kim Hyong Jik said this, apparently reading Hong's mind. Hong was disconcerted and settled down his half-raised body. But he could not quench the bright fury in his eyes.

"I gather that the people in the Songchon area are feeling very bitter against the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau. What do you say, Mr. Hong?"

Kim Hyong Jik asked this question in his endeavour to calm Hong Jun Gol down and put over to him the objectives of the forthcoming struggle.

"Yes, sir. They are giving the people a very rough time. Last month on a market day, an official of the Songchon

Branch of the Monopoly Bureau beat up a peasant and fined him 30 *won* for smoking tobacco buds."

"That's right. At present the peasants in Songchon are having great hardships because the Japs control tobacco growing by the law through their Monopoly Bureau. Songchon has long been famed for its tobacco. The leaf is as big as a winnowing fan; if you cure it well at the right temperature, it turns golden and has a very delicate aroma. So the people there lived on tobacco growing. But as soon as the Japs infiltrated into Songchon they completely monopolized the enterprise. When they find peasants growing tobacco, sabre-rattling officials come from the Monopoly Bureau Branch and force them to sell all their produce at such a low price that it hardly covers their costs. And if a peasant is found selling as much as a single leaf, or, as you said, picking up some tobacco buds to smoke it at home, he is fined or thrown into jail. So in Songchon the peasants' grievances against the Monopoly Bureau are mounting. That's why I think we can fight in Songchon—the people there will fight."

"I'll see to that, sir. I'll make sure that the damned Monopoly Bureau Branch is destroyed."

Hong Jun Gol roared, his face flushed crimson.

"Ha, ha, ha. Good. But you can't just go out and destroy it. Here is my advice to you." Kim Hyong Jik said the first thing was to get the organizations in the area to lay the vicious Jap policy of plunder bare to the peasants in the whole county and to build up anti-Japanese feeling: and he detailed the methods of a legal mass struggle to demand the abolition of the tobacco monopoly, a rise in the price at which tobacco was bought in and the punishment of vicious officials using violence, imposing illegal levies and taxes.

"You mustn't act rashly; you'll have to make careful and detailed preparations and when the opportunity arrives, you must act resolutely. Then you'll succeed, and the people will have faith and the conviction that they can defeat the Japs; so this fight will bring in many new comrades in Songchon. What do you say? Do you think you can handle it, Mr. Hong?" asked Kim Hyong Jik at the end. Hong Jun Gol remained seated with a grave countenance; the urge to dash off right out was gone. Suddenly he heaved a sigh of grief.

"From what you have told me, I'm afraid it's beyond me

to lead such a battle."

Kim Hyong Jik grinned at Hong Jun Gol's frank confession and his dispirited tone.

"Don't worry, Mr. Hong. Go ahead and launch it. Consult Miss Pyon Ok Rim and the other comrades in the friendship society and village community guild and pool your talents and strength. You'll manage. And I'll do all I can to help you."

"Well, if you help us, then...."

Hong Jun Gol stared at Kim Hyong Jik; he seemed to have a little more confidence now.

"Have confidence and cheer up. You are going to tread an untrodden path and it won't be easy. There will be setbacks and sacrifices too. However, we'll need to rise ten, nay a hundred times and fight before the final victory. What is important is to believe in the power of the masses, the strength of your fellow countrymen. If only we can arouse them, then we will win."

Hong Jun Gol and Maeng Gyong Jae listened to Kim Hyong Jik; their faces showed a firm resolve.

"Now, let us discuss the struggle at Seoul."

Saying this Kim Hyong Jik advanced his proposal to Maeng Gyong Jae on how to scatter handbills. The handbills, he said, must first of all expose the illegality of Japanese occupation of Korea, and their bestiality, their atrocities; then must explain the policy of the KNA of liberation by the Korean people's own efforts and appeal to the whole nation to rise up as one man in the patriotic struggle against Japan. The handbills should not be abstract or uniform, they should be addressed to workers, to peasants, students, intellectuals, traders and manufacturers, and other groups of people, written specifically for them on their problems. He also referred to practical actions to get KNA members and organizations on the move, to throw the whole city into confusion by scattering the handbills in every street at once at a preset time on National Humiliation Day. He added that it would be a good idea to push threatening letters into homes of the Governor-General, of Watanabe (the Superintendent-General of the Police) and other specially malevolent Japs and collaborators.

His big head and broad forehead raised, Maeng Gyong Jae listened to every word that Kim Hyong Jik spoke, trying to understand the full meaning.

Having assigned the two men their respective tasks, Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"Basic arrangements have been made for all parts of the country. A few days ago Mr. Kang Jin Sok left for Chientao to guide the Independence Army units. This time I called you two, because Seoul, Songchon and Pyongyang will be vital in the coming struggle. You'll get things started, and that will be the signal for general action. Only when things are going well in your areas will the battle gain real momentum in the other area."

"I'll not forget." The two men spoke almost at the same time, impressed by the importance of the tasks and by Kim Hyong Jik's trust in them.

"Lastly, I would like to stress one thing," said Kim Hyong Jik, looking at the two dependable comrades filled with firm determination. "You must always remember the great objectives of the forthcoming struggle. Neither must you act rashly nor must you lack resolution. One of the main objectives of this coming battle is to hit the arrogant Japanese on the back of the head to demonstrate that we Koreans are alive; but what is far more important is to develop the KNA to new heights during the struggle.

"In other words, so far we have been mainly concerned with getting new comrades, uniting the masses and laying the foundation of the KNA. Now working from these foundations, we must go into the attack and open up a new phase of the fight for independence. For only by going into the attack can we effectively prove that the KNA's great doctrine and objectives are right and win many more independence fighters and above all the people to our banner. And only by doing that, can we expand and strengthen the KNA. Only by growing through this hard struggle will the KNA be a strong enough organization, and experienced enough to guide our nation towards our long-term objectives."

Listening to Kim Hyong Jik the two men clearly realized the significance of the forthcoming struggle in his profound plan for the nation's sovereignty and independence.

When Kim Hyong Jik, Maeng Gyong Jae and Hong Jun Gol got to their feet, it was late at night, and the grass was wet with dew.

The two men wanted to set off immediately, but

Kim Hyong Jik persuaded them to come back to the village.

At dawn they were off. As Hong Jun Gol bid farewell, Kim Hyong Jik told him on his return home to tell Pyon Ok Rim that she had been accepted for membership to the KNA and to explain KNA policy, aims and rules. The two men left, excited about the coming struggle and full of fighting spirit.

6

Pyon Ok Rim stopped in front of a shoe shop. There were plimsolls, sports shoes, rubber shoes, wooden clogs, and other kinds of footwear for grown-ups and children on display. Japanese rubber-soled socks with a separate toe placed side by side with the wooden clogs drew her attention. In this shoe shop display she suddenly seemed to see the epitome of this country being Japanized and falling into decay before it had been fully civilized. The white cotton sunshade over the display stand fluttered in a breeze. The strings of Pyong Ok Rim's cool ramie jacket and the skirts of the black cotton serge fluttered lightly too. Behind her stood two boys, of thirteen or fourteen, with unkempt hair, each carrying a big bundle.

Pyon Ok Rim's serene eyes were focussed on some plimsolls in a corner, which looked hard-wearing. She was going to ask the price, thought better of it and then hesitated for a while. Should I buy them or not? Pyon Ok Rim asked to herself. But what is his size? She could not make up her mind. She saw Hong Jun Gol's bast sandals before her eyes.

"Have a pair of these white sports shoes, miss. It's the latest product of the *Asahi Rubber*. They're all the vogue among the girls in Seoul. He, he...."

The small-eyed salesman who had something stiff about him picked up a pair of white sports shoes and smiled flatteringly.

"No, not the sports shoes, the next ones.... How much are these plimsolls?" She blurted out, blushing. The salesman stared at her, surprised.

"The plimsolls?"

"Yes, for my father...."

Ok Rim was confused and made an awkward excuse.

"I see—what's his size?"

As far as the salesman was concerned, it was none of his business whether Pyong Ok Rim bought the sports shoes or plimsolls. He simply asked the size, pleased to be making a sale. But Ok Rim again hesitated before she answered.

What size does he take? She wondered. Why on earth did I think of buying him shoes?

Her heart beat wildly. The salesman waited for Ok Rim's answer. She vacillated. Hong Jun Gol's bast sandals reappeared before her eyes. That day when he returned home from a trip to Chientao with Kim Hyong Jik, he had almost run into the yard of the school in that wornout pair of bast sandals, and early next morning he had gone off in the same bast sandals to send young men to Chientao and collect funds for the army; she thought of him who, ever since his return from Chientao, had been so dynamic in his work, covering scores of miles a day, covering Pyongan and Kangwon Provinces.

"Size 12. Give me two pairs, please."

Ok Rim heard her own voice answering. She paid for them, wrapped them in a wrapping cloth, left the shop as if fleeing. The two boys followed the teacher, wondering.

Only when she was out of the marketplace did she slow down with a sigh of relief. Turning to the boys she said.

"Let's go and have some lunch, boys."

The two boys goggled their eyes and looking up at their teacher, answered "Yes, miss—" in their broken harsh voices.

After lunch at a noodle house, Ok Rim and the boys went to the riverbank from where they could see the ferry on the Piryu-gang. She called to the boys to go home ahead.

"Should we?"

"What about you, miss?"

The boys were wide-eyed, staring at Ok Rim. Their unkempt hair was covered in dust. With a smile Ok Rim answered.

"I have to go somewhere on business. So you go ahead. Here, you'd better take your ferry fares."

Ok Rim took some coppers out of her purse.

"But how can you come back all alone?"

The two boys whom she had given the money asked doubtfully.

"Don't worry. I'll be back by dusk. By the way, could you take this for me?..."

Ok Rim scrupled for a few seconds, before she handed the shoes to the boy who stood facing her. He took the bundle mechanically.

"Take this to Mr. Hong's. Tell them this is what he asked us to buy...."

Ok Rim blushed, but the boys did not notice it.

"Yes, miss! Then come back soon."

"All right, boys. Hurry up or you'll miss it."

The boys bowed and turned and ran for the ferry.

After seeing the boys off Ok Rim turned towards the street. The road by the riverbank led to the end of the street. The top of the bank was lined with old weeping willows whose thick trunks seemed to measure a few spans. The slender willow branches hung low and thick dancing languidly over the blue waters of the Piryu-gang. At the bend of the river at the far end of the bank, stood the time-worn *Tongmyonggwan* (or East Light House—*Tr.*) whose tilted roof spread like wings which seemed about to fly softly into the azure sky. Ok Rim gazed at the scene for a while. Her beautiful face betrayed her pensive mood. Her big serene and gentle eyes which at the same time showed firmness and intelligence were directed towards the *Tongmyonggwan,* before she began to take her steps.

The blue skies, the blue river, the weeping willows which hung like a green curtain and the path on the green bank —everything was blue and green, fresh and luxuriant in the thick of the summer. Yet, the youth, beauty and virility of Ok Rim's lithe figure walking along the bank outshone even summer at its height. She had such rosy cheeks, clear and bright eyes, flexible and slender body and neat carriage.

Ok Rim was 23. You might say that at twenty-three a girl is no longer in the first flush of youth. Yet Ok Rim felt it both physically and mentally this spring.

As the whole of the Korean people had been tormented by the tragic ruin of the country, so had she by prolonged trials of the cruel snowstorms, that had prevented her youth from blossoming. Her father had been killed in action by the Japs and her mother had not long survived him, leaving Ok Rim alone in the wide world. She was a woman, so she could not

take up her father's sword, so she had had no means to avenge her parents.

Even at this moment as she walked along the riverbank Ok Rim was thinking about what had happened two weeks ago. On that moonlit night, on Mt. Ryongma-san in front of the village Ok Rim and Hong Jun Gol stood facing the young men, students from her evening classes whom she had taught for nearly a year. They were to join a group of youths being sent by Kim Hyong Jik to reinforce the Independence Army units in Chientao. She had worked as a teacher, bearing in mind Kim Hyong Jik's teaching that educational work was more than enlightening people, that it was the vital revolutionary task of training workers for the independence movement. But she had never dreamed that she would see young people whom she herself had taught take up arms to join the sacred battle for independence. While teaching her students she had at the back of her mind thought it a pity that she, a woman, could not like Hong Jun Gol carry a gun in the independence movement. But then Kang Ban Sok's words rang in Ok Rim's ears.

"To my mind it's far greater and worthier task for you to teach at school and train hundreds and thousands of independence fighters who will carry guns than to take up arms yourself. My husband always says, 'The teacher's chalk should be a powerful revolutionary weapon. You too must think that way and teach our children and our village women.'"

After Hong Jun Gol left for Chientao with Kim Hyong Jik, Ok Rim had endeavoured to turn her evening class at Chang-gol into a regular community school. But she had faced one problem after another—funds, buildings, manpower. So she had given up her venture, thinking that she had better wait until Hong Jun Gol came back, but again she stirred herself and went to Pyongyang. She had a small house there, in which she and her mother used to live. She had intended to sell it and to get some money, but she could not find a buyer right away. On her way back she stopped at Naedong to visit Kang Ban Sok; she had heard about her removal into that place. Kang Ban Sok treated her kindly, like a sister. Ok Rim told her frankly about difficulties over school affairs. She also told her that she regretted not being able to join the independence movement arms in hand because she was a woman. Holding Ok Rim's hands tightly in hers, Kang Ban Sok said that there was

no reason why women should not fight the Japs with guns, citing the women in different ages and countries who had fought to defend their nation's independence. At present, the Korean women, Ok Rim, in particular, had a more urgent task. And she detailed Kim Hyong Jik's experience in building up Myongsin School in Naedong: going out among the villagers, teaching and guiding them to form a school guild, and improving the school by the united efforts of the village. Encouraged by Kang Ban Sok's teaching, Ok Rim had hardened her resolve and on her return to Chang-gol, she worked energetically, educating and persuading the people in the neighbouring villages and influential persons to expand the school to some extent and obtain some equipment and school things. As a result, a few days before Hong Jun Gol's return, she had been able to put up the signboard "Chang-gol School", though the school still left much to be desired.

"The teacher's chalk should be a powerful revolutionary weapon."

Standing on the top of Mt. Ryongma-san face to face with her students these words had warmed up her heart. She had calmed her beating heart and gone up to her pupils.

"Wherever you go in whatever hardship, fight well. Engrave Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's great plan on your minds." Ok Rim's clear, quiet voice advising her pupils had shaken with emotion.

"Don't you worry, miss. We youth from Chang-gol will always be fighting in the vanguard."

"Please keep on sending young men from Chang-gol, miss."

Each of the youths had made some similar request.

"Don't worry. I'll keep sending them!"

Though her voice had trembled with joy, her eyes had filled with tears. She felt a lump in her throat, and she felt that her dead parents must be watching their daughter from the other world. Hong Jun Gol left with the young people, walking along the ridge running in the direction of Kangdong. Ok Rim stood motionless for a long time on the crest of Mt. Ryongma-san, watching Hong and his party until their figure faded in the moonlight. From that day on, Ok Rim, who had once seen herself as helpless, had lived happily, with a consciousness that she was making her small contribution to the independence movement. She had dedicated her whole self to school affairs.

Today was Sunday. Early in the morning she had come over to the township of Songchon with the two boys to buy

stationery and other school things.

But, right now, she was walking towards the *Tongmyonggwan* for another purpose. Near *Tongmyonggwan* lived an influential man well known in Songchon. Ok Rim had taught his son almost like his governess. Moreover, while she was teaching on a short course in the township she had boarded at his house for over a year. Old Choe, the master of the house, was a decent person and though he was not a revolutionary, he was patriotic. Since a few days before, Ok Rim had hit on the idea of meeting this Old Choe to collect a contribution to military funds. She had been anxious to help Hong Jun Gol who bustled about days and nights. And, moreover she had had an irrepressible urge at least to get some money for the guns her former students would carry. When she had arrived in the township this morning she had hesitated, wondering if she should wait and consult Hong Jun Gol. But, as she turned into the street her resolve hardened.

Ok Rim came down the bank road, and walked some way past the *Tongmyonggwan* and stopped in front of an enormous gate. Her heart was thumping against her ribs. But she braced herself and asked for the master.

The mistress was delighted to see her, and taking both her hands in her own, led the guest in.

"Look, old man! Nam Sik's teacher has come."

The white-bearded old master of the house was also happy to see her and came down into the courtyard. Ok Rim seated herself calmly in the parlour facing the old man.

"Thanks to your efforts, Nam Sik succeeded in entering a middle school in Seoul." The old man praised her, sincere gratitude in his eyes. Blushing, Ok Rim returned.

"I've nothing to do with.... Your son was really a clever boy."

"Oh, no, not at all. By the way, have you really given up teaching for good? They say you went out to the village of Yangji or something like that...."

"Yes, sir."

"So, it's true, eh? Yes, no conscientious person would teach our little ones Japanese, would they?"

He nodded to his own question. Then he went over to a greater lamentation that the national situation was getting still worse. Hearing Old Choe she braced herself, tried to

find the right words and finally decided that there she had better say her piece pointblank.

"Father, I have the impudence to come here today to discuss an urgent matter."

"An urgent matter? Go ahead and tell me."

Old Choe looked at Ok Rim inquiringly. She was thoughtful for a few seconds and spoke up.

"As you said just now, sir, our country's position is worsening; but many patriots are fighting firmly to restore it."

"Why, then, you mean they have some way to restore the nation's position?"

There was a startled look in his eyes. It was quite new to him to hear that there was some way to restore the nation's destiny, and he was still more startled to hear the news from a woman, however enlightened.

"Yes, they have, sir. In the light of the present situation...."

Recalling the gist of what Kim Hyong Jik had been reported to have said at the gathering to found the KNA, Ok Rim began her detailed explanation on the analysis of the international situation and on the ways and means to make the independence movement a success. The old man's astounded expression turned gradually into one of admiration and emotion, his head nodding repeatedly.

"...If we 20 million Koreans rise in unity, upholding that policy, we can win independence positively by our own endeavours. So all of us 20 millions should pool our strength."

As Ok Rim finished her calm speech, the old man seemed very much moved and, nodding, said.

"You are right. Your logic is perfect. Each word of yours goes right to my heart. Where was that unexcelled policy mapped out, miss?"

Ok Rim was a trifle taken aback. She had an itch to tell frankly about Kim Hyong Jik and the KNA, but she managed to control herself. She was not allowed to be careless.

"Father, I was also told by some independence crusaders. They say that the independence movement has a great leader now, who put forward this policy. I don't know who he is, though. I was told that in accordance with this policy many crusaders and masses of people are uniting at home and abroad to foster strength to fight a great battle in the future. On hearing the news, I couldn't just sit with arms folded,

though I am only a frail woman, and here I am to discuss with you how to help these people."

For some while Old Choe looked reflectively at Ok Rim, without a word.

"I see. I think I needn't delve into that particular point any more. But, miss, how can I help? I'm too old to help them with my physical strength; I haven't much money though I'm not tightfisted, but...."

"Thank you, sir. The size of the contribution doesn't matter...."

Ok Rim explained the fact that at present a large number of young people were joined in the independence movement and that they needed weapons.

After their talk Ok Rim walked out of the big gate, seen off by the old couple. They had advised her to stay the night with them because the sun would set before she got back, but she had politely refused and promised to come again three or four days later. Old Choe said he would have five or six hundred *won* ready by then.

Ok Rim walked along the road on the bank of the Piryugang at a rapid pace. She felt her heart and body dancing like the slender willow branches hanging over the blue waters of the river, floating like the white clouds in the sky. She urged the ferry man to cross the river quickly.

Ok Rim trekked steadily along the ox-cart road up along the Bloody River that flowed with a furious noise through a narrow, rugged valley. She wiped her perspiring forehead continually with a handkerchief. But when dusk fell she still had ten more *ri* to cover to Chang-gol. The sky was turning purple in the glow of sunset and it was getting dark in the valley walled by high mountains on all sides. She stood at the riverside and glanced around, worried. There was not a shadow to be seen in front or behind. Soon it would get dark. The further up the valley she went, the louder the roar of the waters. She stared uneasily at far darkening sky up over Chang-gol.

What shall I do, she thought. I should have told the boys to wait....

In the mountains the night comes down quickly once the sun has set. Even in the few short moments that she stood there, she felt as if the darkness was coiling itself around her ankles.

Oh my, I shouldn't be afraid of a night journey, she told to herself.

Ok Rim pursed up her lips and clenched her fists, and walked as quickly as an arrow, looking straight ahead.

Presently Ok Rim recalled that dark night last spring when the evening classes had been arranged; she had walked along the ridgeway with Hong Jun Gol: The stars were twinkling through the bushes; they talked and talked, and as they were crossing the ridge, lights were flickering in her village in a distance.... Awaking from her reveries she was anxious to know about Hong Jun Gol. I wonder if he got the young men safely to the assembly point? Could he be back tonight, maybe? When he was away, she would long for him, and when she met him, she would blush. It was a startling change that had taken place in her heart this spring, along with all the other changes in her life.

While in Pyongyang, and while working as teacher at Songchon there had been many suitors, among them sons of rich men and gentlemen. However, Ok Rim had not looked at anyone of them; no man had attracted her. The girl's heart had been locked up as if in an ice-box. But the ice in her heart had melted and the warm spring wind started to blow. Hong Jun Gol was neither educated nor well bred; he was the son of a poor peasant who had neither money nor power. But Ok Rim's heart met the spring, God knows from when and why. His husky body, his sun-tanned roundish face with high cheek bones, his simple and unsophisticated way of talking, his large tender eyes, and that warm patriotic zeal that seethed within his heart—Oh, how I long for him, how dependable he is!

Ok Rim was walking rapidly, looking towards the darkening sky over Chang-gol; and Hong's image was vivid before her eyes.

Where could he be right now? she asked to herself. Maybe he is walking alone along some mountain path as I am?

As she was sinking in the abyss of anxiety, she halted, her face turning crimson. My Goodness! What nonsense are you thinking about? she remonstrated to herself. He has dedicated his whole life to the revolutionary movement....

She looked about her, as if her thoughts had been laid bare to somebody. It was becoming darker and darker in the valley, and the roaring of the water was getting louder. Coming to, about to go ahead again, Ok Rim recoiled.

Who could it be, she wondered. The white figure of a man had appeared on the shadowy road ahead. They say it is terrifying to come across a stranger in the night. She felt a chill in her marrows. While Ok Rim was standing there in fear, the man came nearer. He shouted and then ran towards her. She could not understand what he was shouting because of the roar of the water. Ok Rim took a few backward steps, saucer-eyed. Her heart beat like a pigeon in a trap beating its wings.

"Why, it's him!" Ok Rim cried to herself. For the man now striding towards her was none other than Hong Jun Gol. She sighed with relief and rejoiced. Her heart leapt. Ok Rim took several quick steps forward, in a flurry, until Hong Jun Gol came up to her and stopped.

"Miss Ok Rim!"

"Oh, Mr. Hong!"

The two faced each other. Hong Jun Gol could not hide his delight of meeting her; a broad grin on his face showed his teeth which looked unusually white in the dark.

"Why do you travel at night like this? You should have stayed overnight in the town. I could have done the job for you."

His remonstrative tone was mixed with admiration, as their eyes met.

"How could I hand even this sort of job to you when you are so busy, journeying days and nights?"

"Why did you set out all alone at sunset?"

Their hearts felt each other's loving care.

"Are you on your way somewhere?" Ok Rim inquired in spite of herself.

"Me?"

Hong Jun Gol retorted dejectedly. Why do you ask me such a question? Hong Jun Gol said to himself. You know why I'm here. Apparently your heart is anxious to confirm some truth, which has made you ask the question. Ok Rim turned away her blushing face.

"Well, I too returned to Chang-gol at dusk, Miss Pyon. I called at your lodgings, and they said you had gone to the township. I happened to meet Dong Sik on the road, who told me that you had stayed behind on business... so... it was getting dark and.... To get a fresh air...."

Hong Jun Gol faltered as if to excuse himself; you could

not tell if he saw through to her soul. With her head bowed Ok Rim fumbled with the strings of her jacket, whispering "Thank you..." sincerely.

"Not at all.... Oh, yes. Let's go. They are worried about you back in the village."

"Yes."

Hong Jun Gol strode on and Ok Rim followed him at a quick pace. But Ok Rim kept falling behind. Then Hong Jun Gol would stop and turn to look at her. Whenever he did so, his eyes showed his desire to speak, but then he would turn and walk on again.

They approached a low hillock. Hong Jun Gol had reached the top and waited for Ok Rim. Now she was beside him, but didn't carry on walking. He faced her. Ok Rim thought this strange and raised her head. Hong Jun Gol was grinning, God knows why. She took a step backward.

"Miss Ok Rim, honestly speaking, I came to you in a hurry because I have a very urgent news. As you didn't come, I thought I would have to go over to the township even."

"To the township?! What's happened?"

Ok Rim was completely perplexed.

"Miss Ok Rim, on my way back I met Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, and he told me that it had been decided that Miss Ok Rim be admitted to the KNA." Hong Jun Gol's voice betrayed excitement.

"Oh, my, is... is that true?"

She could hardly believe it. How could a woman such as I.... Hong Jun Gol's face was serious and shone with joy.

"It's true. He asked me to let you know this decision and to convey his heartfelt congratulations to you and also his hope that you will work still better and become a true daughter to the organization and to our fellow countrymen, an outstanding woman independence worker."

"A woman independence worker?!" Ok Rim muttered looking blankly at Hong Jun Gol, like a woman losing her soul. Hong Jun Gol nodded.

She felt as if she was in a dream. It was really like a dream.

Is it true that I'm a member of the KNA and a woman independence worker? she wondered. But evidently it is true. Isn't Hong Jun Gol standing before me, his eyes blinking more deeply moved even than I? Her heart started to beat

violently. Something hot was surging up within her chest. She raised her face to look up at the darkening mountain ridges.

"Father, your daughter has found the true road to carry forward your will. I've joined in the independence movement, upholding Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's teachings. Father and Mother, do you see this daughter of yours?" Ok Rim cried out in her secret heart. She could not check the tears welling in her eyes and streaming down her cheeks. She began to sob, covering her face with her hands. This disconcerted Hong Jun Gol. His eyes popped.

"What's the matter, Miss Ok Rim?" Hong Jun Gol asked, utterly perplexed. But Ok Rim went on crying. Is she crying because she is miserable over her lonely hard life in the past, or because she is so profoundly happy in achieving a long-cherished desire, that she had never thought possible? Hong Jun Gol who had stood there embarrassed, went hesitantly over to her.

"Miss Ok Rim, don't get excited. What is wrong? Today is a happy day for you...."

Hong Jun Gol laid his hand on her shoulder. Ok Rim felt his tough yet warm hand. Instantly she felt her whole body and soul being supported by a strong pillar and she became firmer and gradually quietened down. The sobbing stopped. Ok Rim took a handkerchief from the sleeve of her jacket and wiped her face. She raised her face up, quietly taking a backward step. Hong Jun Gol looked hard at the woman. She smiled faintly. Her serene eyes still with teardrops shone more brightly in the semi-darkness.

"Please don't worry, sir. I... I'm just so happy that...." Ok Rim whispered.

"Oh, were you? But I...." Hong Jun Gol murmured, obviously relieved.

"I'll do my best to be a woman independence worker and to live up to Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's expectations."

Full of a firm determination, her face now brightened beautifully.

"Why not. I'm sure you'll be a fine woman independence worker, Miss Ok Rim."

Hong Jun Gol's face was again overflowing with delight just as when he had first met this evening.

The man and woman went down the sloping road, abreast of each other. The valley was darker, but they did not care.

"Were they all right on their way?"

"They were. They must be in Chientao by now."

"And are they faring well at Mr. Kim's—his wife and son?"

"Yes, they are all right. Oh, yes, Miss Ok Rim. His wife sends you her greetings and a book as a gift."

"Did she send a book for me?" Ok Rim's eyes glittering with ecstasy of joy as she looked at Hong Jun Gol.

"Yes. She said she loved this book when she was a girl. The title is *Biographies of Patriotic Women.* I should have brought it with me. I'll bring it to you as soon as we get to the village."

"Oh, how kind of her...."

She could not finish her words, she was so touched by Kang Ban Sok's love. Her longing, tender eyes looked up at the sky.

"Like husband like wife. It's only a few months since she came over there, but she is already popular with the village women; she united almost all of them, taught them how to read and write, educated them in patriotism and even set examples in educating children at her home and running her household."

"I'm lagging far behind her. She manages to do such great work and look after the household chores...."

They talked as they walked along. Presently they lost the thread of conversation, and went on in silence for a while.

The sounds of the water and their footsteps were heard alternatively. An owl screeched deep in the forest. They walked in silence for a while. As they came round the mountain Mt. Ryongma-san appeared in the distance against the dark blue sky, and a few lights flickered at the foot of the mountain.

The two looked at each other, as if they had promised. Then Ok Rim dropped her eyes. Hong Jun Gol's large feet were striding ahead. She watched his footwear. Despite the semi-darkness, it was undoubtedly one of the two pairs of plimsolls she had bought and sent to his house during the day. Her face flushed. Yet, she felt happy and grateful at the bottom of her heart.

"Miss Ok Rim, I think I'll have to set out on another journey tonight."

Hong Jun Gol's roaring voice awoke her completely and she raised her face.

"My Goodness, do you have to leave again... as soon as you came back and without even resting one day...."

"This time I've been given a tough exciting task by Mr. Kim Hyong Jik, a task of setting this township of Songchon into an uproar."

"Setting the township of Songchon into an uproar?"

"I think you too will have to do your share in this, Miss Ok Rim."

"Me?"

She was perplexed and stared into Hong's face unable to grasp his full meaning.

"Ha, ha, ha,... Why are you surprised? When I met him last time, Mr. Kim Hyong Jik told me that the KNA must go over into a full-scale attack."

Hong Jun Gol turned his thoughts in his mind before he detailed the task he had been given to by Kim Hyong Jik. While speaking Hong Jun Gol got excited gradually and Pyon Ok Rim became more and more strained as she listened.

"His profound plan and strong will-power have no limits." Ok Rim exclaimed in admiration as she had heard him out, and shot a bright look at Hong Jun Gol.

"We must take action without delay. Miss Pyon, would you first draft a handbill to expose the crimes committed by the Jap Monopoly Bureau Branch and arouse the people to oppose Japan? And I would appreciate if you could make sure that the duplicator is moved into Tiger Cave in the valley behind Mt. Ryongma-san to print the handbills. I'm going to visit our comrades all round the county now. I think we'll have to gather at Tiger Cave in a week to discuss the ways and means of carrying out Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's policy."

"I'll do my level best," Pyon Ok Rim answered.

"By the way, Miss Ok Rim, at present we have fewer comrades in the township than in any place in the county, and Mr. Kim instructed me to arouse the townsfolk, too, at all costs. You lived in the town for quite a while, so, I wonder if you know any people sympathetic to the movement."

"In the town? Well...."

Ok Rim stopped and reflected for a while. The image of

Old Choe whom she had met in the day flashed across her mind.

"I know a man, but I don't know if he will...."

Ok Rim faltered before she told roughly about Old Choe's background and political inclinations and about her visit to him this afternoon.

"Why, so you mean you have already persuaded him to contribute money for military use?"

"Yes. I thought I'd better do it myself...."

"Well done. That means that he is more than half way on to our side now. Now let's do it this way. Keep meeting the old man and use your influence on him. First you'll tell him about the KNA's aims and policies, and if he is truly sympathetic with us, then we'll join hands with him in the forthcoming struggle."

"I'll do my best."

It animated Pyon Ok Rim to see Hong Jun Gol look so pleased. The two comrades walked on, discussing what needed to be done.

They had to part at the entrance to the village. They stood without a word for some time facing each other.

"Are you leaving now?" Pyon Ok Rim whispered wonderingly.

"Yes...."

"Why should you leave as soon as you returned.... You should rest overnight at least, otherwise you will fall ill and...."

"Fall ill? Oh, no. I feel like I can run even hundreds of miles right away. Now that I've got the new shoes you sent to me, I feel like flying every time I take a step."

"Oh, my!"

Pyon Ok Rim gave a quick glance at Hong Jun Gol who went grinning all over his face, and lowered her flushing face. She was pleased and bashful, too, to see that Hong Jun Gol had so gladly accepted the shoes she had sent him. She thought it was heavenly that the darkness prevented Hong Jun Gol from seeing her blushing deep red.

"Thank you, Miss Ok Rim."

Hong Jun Gol said, his face suddenly turning serious.

"I wonder if they fit you...." Ok Rim muttered.

"Perfectly."

The threads of their conversation were cut again. But at this moment they did not need words. They were happy. Life,

struggle, love! Their bodies and minds pulsated in an ecstasy of pride and joy. The glimmering lights in the village shone their welcome.

CHAPTER VII

THE OUTCRIES ECHO ACROSS THE THREE THOUSAND RI

1

Revolutionary comrades came to Naedong from many parts of the country after Maeng Gyong Jae and Hong Jun Gol had gone; they too, were assigned new tasks, left in high spirits.

And in a fortnight Myongsin School closed for the summer holidays.

Next day Kim Hyong Jik got in a sailing-boat at Maekjon ferry, Ho Gi Son accompanied him as steerman.

Kim Hyong Jik stayed at Pyongyang for three days to help Pang In Su, Cho Pil U and Mr. O and acquaint himself with the arrangements for a protest meeting in the city, giving them a few advices.

Kim Hyong Jik left Pyongyang with Ho Gi Son and on the third day, arrived at Unryul, Hwanghae Province. Having understood the vigorous activities waged by Pak Yun Hwan and other comrades in Unryul, he borrowed a church at the township and called a gathering to inaugurate a KNA organization. He presided over the meeting himself and taught ways and means for building up, expanding and reinforcing the newly organized KNA branches in Unryul and other places in Hwanghae Province and uniting broad sections of people around the KNA.

Following the gathering he visited his comrades and independence workers scattered in the Unryul area and around

Mt. Kuwol-san, inspected their schools and villages, and met pupils and their parents and other guardians; there he led the work of expanding and strengthening KNA organizations and delivered lectures and had talks, thus arousing the masses to the anti-Japanese struggle.

While in Hwanghae Province he met a messenger from Maeng Gyong Jae in Seoul. The situation there was also promising. A local organization had been formed in Seoul and preparations were being made smoothly for the campaign to scatter handbills.

As he finished his guidance in Hwanghae Province, he left for home by a north-bound train. Watching his dynamic activities Ho Gi Son instinctively perceived a stormy moment drawing near.

* * *

At Pyongyang, Pang In Su, Cho Pil U and Mr. O, the principal of Samsong Middle School, were hard at work preparing for a big protest meeting at Moran-bong Hill on National Humiliation Day.

Mr. O had undertaken to organize the influential people in the city, Pang In Su the workers, manufacturers and tradesmen and Cho Pil U the students.

The latter two had skilfully set in motion friendship societies, traders and manufacturers' guild, students associations and other mass organizations; and on the evening after they had received the telegram informing them of Kim Hyong Jik's arrival, they had arranged a conference of all the organizations to be held unobtrusively in a classroom at Samsong Middle School.

The conference had gone without a hitch, when something unexpected happened. Mr. O, who had told them that he might be late because he had important guests, came to the conference room with Song Se Ho, alias Chong Am, and a certain Pastor Paek, who had come over from Shanghai.

Chong Am claimed that in the light of the developments of the present situation, they should think again and carefully,

whether it might not be advisable to cancel the protest rally this time, because, he said, the Korean independence workers abroad had set up negotiations which, if successful, would give Korea independence. Now that the World War was nearing its end, the great powers who had been baptized with the blood of modern war were taking an increasing interest in the international problems that would need to be settled when it ended, particularly, in the problems of small nations. Therefore, he said, the line of action which would in any case gain nothing and might do untold harm for the exposures, condemnations and protests, much akin to riot would give Japan and other great powers the impression, or pretext, that the Koreans were not yet ready for independence and that their actions would mean needless sacrifices for the people. There were heated arguments, then gradually Chong Am's eloquence gained the upper hand; the delegates were swayed by his honeyed words, and were enthralled with the idea that as soon as the war was over, Korea would be handed her independence on a plate. Pang In Su and Cho Pil U vehemently opposed these arguments, but they were unable to save the situation. For Chong Am and Pastor had a hundred honeyed phrases to answer every word they spoke.

Pang In Su and Cho Pil U's hearts burnt and their lips became parched. They felt like taking the two demagogues by the throat and putting them down physically, but of course that would not have done.

Only Pang In Su and a few other youths were still arguing with Chong Am, but they were no match for him in the use of words.

Suddenly Cho Pil U remembered the telegram.

"Brother In Su, I've got to rush off to the station to meet Mr. Kim."

Cho Pil U whispered to Pang In Su who sat next to him and came out of the classroom. He walked down the dark street towards the station at great speed. The thought that Kim Hyong Jik was coming reassured him as if his mind had found a pillar to lean on. He went into the waiting room seething with travellers, and was fearing that he might not be there, might have been unavoidably delayed.

The area round the barrier was crowded. Presently, with a loud whistle, the train pulled in and passengers began to squeeze out through the narrow gate.

"Mr. Kim!"

Cho Pil U could see the tall Kim Hyong Jik immediately in a ramie *turumagi* and a straw hat.

"Ah Mr. Cho Pil U, you're here."

Kim Hyong Jik smiled with pleasure as he raised his straw hat. He was followed by Ho Gi Son. As they got out of the crowded plaza in front of the station, Cho Pil U was overwhelmed with delight and repeated his greetings.

"You must have had a hard journey."

"Ha, ha, ha, not at all.... It's you comrades here who are having the troubles." Kim Hyong Jik looked cheerful, and not in the least tired.

"We've only given you headaches...." Cho Pil U mumbled—he had a great mountain of worries on his mind. Rickshaws and push-carts flowed past them.

Now, in Kim Hyong Jik's presence, Cho Pil U hesitated. How can I tell him about the critical situation the moment he arrives? Should I take him to a hotel first, and arrange another debate with Chong Am? But knowing the way things were going at the conference made him uneasy. If we don't defeat Chong Am and save the situation tonight, our whole plan might go away, he thought, so though it's not good manners, right on his arrival, I must tell him. Cho Pil U hesitated a bit, then finally came out with it.

Kim Hyong Jik heard him in silence. He stopped and asked.

"And has the meeting been adjourned?"

"I asked them to keep it going till I bring you there, sir."

Looking at the other side of the dark alleyway Kim Hyong Jik asked again.

"But how come he showed up there?"

"It seems that Chong Am visited Mr. O and asked his help in organizing lectures and seminars for the youth and students, and influential personages in the town, to propagate their view of the independence movement. Apparently Mr. O first told Chong Am that his policy was not in keeping with current trends and that since we were now preparing for action on National Humiliation Day, he had better join us."

"That man is a flunkey to the marrow of his bones."

"He is. But Mr. O gave way to Chong Am's eloquence, and

it seems that he decided to have the matter debated at the conference."

Kim Hyong Jik stared blankly at Cho Pil U and said, "I understand. Right, let's go," and walked on.

The classroom at the back of Samsong Middle School was packed and the atmosphere inside was hot and sticky. Chong Am was speaking in his fluent falsetto. He cut quite a figure in his white Western suit and black bow, and his speech was fiery and rhetorical, his studied gestures were telling and his face was flushed. In the front row sat Mr. O, Pang In Su, Pastor Paek, and a stranger.

"Let's go to the front, sir," whispered Cho Pil U.

"Wait. Let me listen a few minutes." And Kim Hyong Jik sat down unnoticed at the back.

"...It's seven long years since our country, a sovereign land for four thousand years, met its tragic downfall; and my heart bleeds for it like all of yours. Therefore, my heart leapt and my blood coursed faster in my body, when I was told of this conference about the seventh National Humiliation Day, that you young people aimed at this exciting conference to organize a protest rally to condemn Japan for her crimes and to appeal to the people to fight back. Ah, to fight, to struggle. That is a real man's duty; it is the essence and the power of youth."

As Chong Am raised his hand to emphasize "to fight, to struggle" a student shouted abruptly.

"Why do you call it reckless, sir?"

Fifty or sixty pairs of burning young eyes waited for his answer. Quite composed, Chong Am ran his eyes over the audience and answered.

"It is not from struggle, but from a recklessness that I hold back. My friends, young students whose eyes shine with intelligence, reason, truth, just for a moment let your heads control your hearts. Look at what is going on around you. Take a calm and careful look. What do you think you can achieve with your bare hands, merely by protesting against Japan, now one of the greatest and most barbarous powers in the world? Do you really believe you can defeat Japan and free our country that way? Think, and then give me a serious answer, if you please."

Chong Am asked the students in his counteroffensive. There was a stir among the audience for a time, but none of them rose readily.

"So what d'you want us to do—sit back and twiddle our thumbs?" cried an indignant voice from near the front.

"Of course not. That we shouldn't do. But we must find a suitable, a reasonable, realistic way of dealing with the situation, a way in which we could regain our national rights and, having found it, take it."

Chong Am was dexterous at manipulating the audience. A student sprang to his feet at a corner to the left.

"We're seeking that right road, the road to independence built by our own efforts."

"I know it well. And I have earnestly supported you abroad. Your doctrine is right, and methods are reasonable. Except only that they lack reality and coherence. It is right and legitimate for Koreans to claim that independence should be won by the Koreans when the opportunity arrives, that golden opportunity, when the great powers are at each other's throats. But when? that is the question, when will that golden opportunity arrive? And, moreover, even then we will need to have built up strong enough forces to win against the powerful forces of Japan. Friends, stop dreaming. It is a lovely dream, a wonderful illusion, but alas, it never can come true. And what is even sadder is, as I've been pointing out to you all evening, while you are busy with your delusion that rare, that truly golden opportunity for us to recover our national rights might pass you by."

Looking round the room, now full of confidence, Chong Am went on:

"America's President Wilson, perhaps the most important, the most influential person in the world today, made an appeal. He said that self-determination for all nations is a fundamental condition for peace. The war is drawing to a close. And his appeal has caused great stir among the nations of East and West and right around the world. That is what's happening in the world—it is a ray of light, nay, it is an aurora for us, for our fellow countrymen in their abyss of sorrow. Why?..."

Chong Am paused, drew in a breath, and then went on at length explaining how America would help Korea to independence. His claims were quite preposterous, but

Kim Hyong Jik could see that the situation was serious, for from the students' faces it was clear that Chong Am's speech was having its effect—on them and even on Mr. O.

Kim Hyong Jik decided that unless he acted fast, the situation probably could not be saved. Meanwhile Chong Am had reached his peroration.

"...Dear students, at this time, when our nation has a truly golden opportunity in sight, the riot you are planning will not only cause a tragic bloodbath, it will give the Japanese a pretext for still greater cruelty in their colonial rule. And further, it could plunge all Asia into turmoil, losing us the support and sympathy of Western powers that we so sorely need; throwing out of the window this opportunity for finally regaining our rights as a great independent nation. Friends, on behalf of all the independence crusaders who are working, working day and night abroad, I would earnestly advise you to think the matter over seriously and change your tack. Of course I am intending to have a frank discussion with the gentleman who was going to lead this action, but it seems to me that it depends on you, your people here, the ones who would be running things, to put your policy right."

Chong Am pulled out a snow-white handkerchief to wipe the drops of perspiration from his forehead. Then he looked at the audience with an air of triumph as the voices of the audience rose into a general hubbub.

At that moment Kim Hyong Jik stood up and called out "Mr. Chong Am!", his voice ringing out over the top of the noise. All the eyes turned to him, and Chong Am, who had looked well pleased with audience reaction, was startled as he saw Kim Hyong Jik.

"Why, it's you, Mr. Kim...," said Chong Am changing that fleeting worried look into a forced smile, as he said smoothly.

"You have come just at the right moment. I wanted to see you.... Do come up."

"I don't think that will be necessary; I thank you for your speech, but I would like to ask you just one question."

"A question? Oh, you needn't do that. Mr. Kim, shall you and I and the principal first go to another room, for I have something very urgent to consult with you about."

Chong Am turned to Mr. O and Pastor Paek as if to seek agreement. Mr. O stood up uneasily, slightly embarrassed.

"I see no reason why we need to meet in private. You've

put your point to the people here, so I think that it perhaps might be better to talk to each other here out in the open."

"All right, if you think it best." Chong Am answered, confident.

"Then, let me ask my question, Mr. Chong Am. Could you tell us what, if any, guarantee the United States and other Western powers have given that they will make a gift of independence to us Koreans?"

All eyes in the room sparkled looking back and forth from Kim Hyong Jik to Chong Am.

"All right. I'll tell you," answered Chong Am readily and got up on the platform. The electric lights reflected from his balding forehead. The audience lapsed into a strained silence and Kim Hyong Jik sat back in his chair. Chong Am opened his lips calmly.

"The first guarantee is President Wilson's claim itself. I do not think that I need bore you with the details, but what it comes down to is this: He says that small colonial nations should become independent to end the great powers' scramble for colonies, which was the root cause of this disastrous war. Surely this is in itself a clearcut guarantee. The second is that the Western powers are incomparably more powerful than Japan. However much Japan has grown in power through this war, beside the Western powers she is still only an infant. We need to win American sympathy, for if we have America behind us, especially if other great powers join her in strongly demanding self-determination for Korea, Japan will have to give way. And the fact is that through our contacts we have already won great sympathy in America. That is the second guarantee. The whole national outlook of America is democratic, hers is a democratic state that demands liberty, equality, peace and tranquility for all nations. I have myself seen a statue of the Goddess of Liberty towering high in New York, the gateway to Greater America. Now I ask you, what further guarantee can we require?"

Drunk with his own argument, Chong Am, well satisfied, looked round the audience, and then turned, smiling, towards Pastor Paek as if looking for confirmation. The Pastor nodded his arrogantly raised head. But Mr. O cast an uneasy glance at Kim Hyong Jik.

Kim Hyong Jik rose to his feet quietly.

"Perhaps I might be permitted just to raise a point or two."

The audience turned to look at Kim Hyong Jik. Pensively he paused for a few seconds before he spoke.

"The first guarantee is unfounded, because President Wilson's claims are a bloody lie."

"What?!"

Chong Am was completely shaken by Kim Hyong Jik's direct and unembellished declaration. Pastor Paek who had sat with his head thrown back winced and straightened himself.

"History shows that even while still underdeveloped as a power, America was working as frantically to grab herself some colonies, to expand her sphere of influence as any other powers. So why these clamours, all of a sudden for independence for small nations today, now that the end of the war is in sight? Quite simple. The redivision of colonies, the whole object of the war, is not being planned in a way that favours America. This is particularly true in the vast and fertile Asia on which America has set her covetous eyes. As for Japan, she has kept comfortably in the sidelines of the war raking in big profits and great power at small expense in blood or money, till now. Especially in Asia, Japan is so strong that she has got the Western powers where she wants them. If the war ends with the balance of forces as they are today, America and other Western powers will face the disastrous situation of losing Asia to Japan, of having to get out. So at this point Wilson has, like a wolf, dressed himself up in sheep's clothes and is baaing as loud as he can for the independence and liberty of small nations. Just as earlier Monroe, screened by ostentatious sign of 'equal opportunity', and 'open door policy', sent his pirate ship, the *USS General Sherman,* up our own Taedong-gang River, so Wilson raises this claim which is an ostentatious screen to cover up America's own insidious aggressive ambitions in Korea and the Orient. In other words, pretending sympathy towards the small nations in the battles for freedom and independence which are going on fiercely like angry waves all over the world, particularly throughout the East, both before and during the war, they are merely plotting to use these struggles as their 'golden opportunity' to kick the Japanese upstarts out, step into their shoes and then, as our new masters to strip off our skins. That is their traditional crafty methods of aggression—you will find this borne out by American history."

The audience listened attentively to Kim Hyong Jik, now turning round to face him. Pastor Paek sat with knitted brows,

but Mr. O had lost his worried look. But Chong Am, still standing on the platform, remained composed. Now he spoke.

"There is of course, an element of truth in your argument, Mr. Kim. But I'm afraid you are speculating, misunderstanding a great deal. America neither has nor yet desires colonies."

Kim Hyong Jik laughed out loud.

"That's interesting. May I ask you when President Wilson announced America's granting independence to the Philippines or incidentally, their own withdrawal from the America mainland?"

"Withdrawal from the America mainland? Are you joking? I thought, Mr. Kim, that we were having a serious discussion on problems decisive for the nation's destiny." Chong Am had gone bright red in the face.

"No, Mr. Chong Am. I'm not joking. I am trying to show you your illusion, lifting up a corner of that tattered sheepskin to show you the wolf. Surely you must know that North America used to be the home of kindly Amerindians. The present settlers went over there in their pirate ships, and like beasts slaughtered many hard-working, honest natives unprovoked and took away their land, their country, did they not? Some of the races who had inhabited the US mainland was completely exterminated, wiped away without a trace—the only evidence of their existence now is in the mummies displayed in a museum. When Wilson undertakes that his people will quit America, will go back across the Atlantic to their homeland, then we might believe his honeyed words. How can we entrust our nation's destiny to a 'democratic state' built on others' blood, however loud their clamours about liberty, equality, philanthropy?"

Making a sweeping condemnation, Kim Hyong Jik looked very solemn.

"Why, that's...."

A very confused Chong Am stuttered, in an attempt to speak. But the audience began to stir.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik is right!"

"America was built on stolen land by pirates!"

"Their promise of liberty and independence is false!"

"We can't trust them, can't trust them!"

There were whispers in every corner.

His face pale and twitching, Pastor Paek stood up.

"Mr. Kim, you misunderstand them. The Americans car-

ried out the sacred will of God to punish barbarism and savagery and to build civilization and humanity!"

"You are right. That is exactly God's will."

As Kim Hyong Jik said this, there was a sudden hush. He went on.

" 'God's will', the white men's God revealed his will to them that they should 'mop up' all the races, black, red, yellow, all except whites; and their statue of the 'Goddess of Liberty' Mr. Chong Am said stands there to defend the liberty of those of her own colour, whites. Let me remind you that in this Taedong-gang River, flowing at our feet lie the rusted cannons and rifles fired on us by American pirates who came over, sent by 'God' and with the blessings of the 'Goddess of Liberty'. Yes, we know the true nature, the true colours of the Yankees. Pastor Paek, if you need to believe in God, why, at least choose a Korean God. And you, Mr. Chong Am, how do you know that your precious Wilson, a descendant of this God and Goddess, does not believe that our Korean nation should be exterminated like the natives of America? Do you really think this man sympathizing with us, will replace Japan and then hand us our independence as a gift? Surely no one, no Korean, could believe that.

"Fellow delegates!"

Kim Hyong Jik called to the audience in ringing voice, his fiery eyes ranging the room.

"What the advice you have been given boils down then is this: either we get flayed by one wolf, or seeking help, call in another one who will also eat us up. The only question is which of wolves sleeps with a full belly in the end. For if we choose this road, one of them surely will.

"We must clearly understand that only by our own efforts, with our own fists and our own bayonets can we beat off the wolves and save our future. I only appeal to those of you whose hearts throb with the sense of justice, militant will, ardour and patriotic loyalty!"

Ending his speech Kim Hyong Jik again looked round the audience, and straightening the outer collar of his white ramie *turumagi,* sat down quietly. There was dead silence in the room. Chong Am and Pastor Paek sat stupidly like men who had lost their souls. Chong Am waved his hand and moved his lips but he could not bring forth a single word. A student sitting in front of Kim Hyong Jik jumped to his feet.

"You are right, sir. We'll follow Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's teachings. Mr. Chong Am, don't give us that stuff. How can we believe in a fellow like Wilson?" The student shouted, wielding his clenched hand over his head. Soon the audience was in uproar.

"We reject the arguments for depending on outside help!"

"Let's restore our national rights by our own efforts!"

"We fully agree with Mr. Kim Hyong Jik!"

"Let's follow Mr. Kim Hyong Jik!"

Chong Am and Pastor Paek were in a flurry. The latter made a confused gesture, his eyes bewildered. However, Chong Am recovered his composure before long and stared around at the noisy audience and shouted disgustfully, "We'll wait and see which of us is right." And he stepped down from the platform and hurried towards the door, as if chased by furies. The Pastor followed, wiping the sweating forehead with the back of his hand.

"Mr. Kim Hyong Jik!" whispered Cho Pil U, who had been seated by Kim Hyong Jik. You could read an emotional feeling in his eyes. Kim Hyong Jik looked towards the door through which the two fellows had just slipped out, and turned slowly to Cho Pil U.

"It's late now. If you have anything further to discuss, let's get on and get finished. We must tighten our guard and picket. And let some students watch Chong Am and Pastor Paek. I don't think they will dare to do anything really dastardly, but let's be on the safe side...."

"Yes, sir."

After Cho Pil U had sent out a few officers of the students associations with necessary instructions, the conference resumed.

It was decided that the protest rally would be held at noon on August 29 in the thicket of Moran-bong Hill. The workers from various factories, the youngsters, students from all schools and influential people in the town were to gather clandestinely on the hill. They were to assemble when the noon siren went to start the protest meeting and, that meanwhile, handbills would be scattered all over the town to throw it into turmoil and confuse the enemy.

Kim Hyong Jik stayed behind in the classroom with Cho Pil U, Pang In Su, Mr. O, and a bald gentleman representing the traders and manufacturers' guild, a KNA member, and a

man in a worker's tunic. Mr. O, who had been unable to utter a word, his head bowed in shame, raised his red face to Kim Hyong Jik and faltered out.

"Mr. Kim, I'm awfully sorry. He was so kind as to visit me and I found it difficult just flatly to ignore his rhetoric, so I brought him along...."

Kim Hyong Jik looked at Mr. O and then said firmly:

"Mr. O, what happened tonight serves as a great lesson for the future activity of our KNA, so I'll give my frank opinion."

Somewhat awe-stricken by Kim Hyong Jik's grave tone of voice, Mr. O replied limply, "Please do." All the rest of the people were strained and stared at the stern face of Kim Hyong Jik. Kim Hyong Jik continued.

"First of all, I must say that I regret what Mr. O did. Already in the spring of last year, you had a bitter experience because you were attracted by Chong Am's rotten theory on dependence on external forces. But, again this time, you couldn't oppose his absurd empty talk, and disturbed our work. Moreover, here at this place were gathered not only Mr. O but also quite a few comrades who can be regarded as the mainstay of our KNA. However, you couldn't deal a decisive blow at Chong Am's treacherous argument for dependence on external forces and were on the verge of frustrating our plan of action. I'm not going to criticize and blame you for your blunder. We should analyze the reasons and eliminate the root cause."

Kim Hyong Jik spoke in a gentle voice, but he was merciless in analyzing the comrades' errors. Everyone drooped his head.

"This is because in our minds we still carry ideas that have something in common with Chong Am's."

"Sir, you are...."

Pang In Su raised his head and was going to speak out.

"You mean I'm going too far? My heart is also pained to have to say this to dear comrades."

Kim Hyong Jik interrupted and closed his eyes. It obviously hurt him to say it, but he went on.

"Yet, I must say it for the sake of the KNA and the future of the independence movement. It would be correct to say that the reason why we could not shatter Chong Am's argument today lies in a certain inclination in us towards flunkeyism—the idea that the Koreans are a small backward nation, that we are not yet able enough to hew out our own destiny, that we could

not survive without worshipping and depending on some big countries. It is this despicable inferiority complex of the small nation, this slavish inclination to flunkeyism that led to Korea's downfall. This we must keenly realize. True, we have launched on the road of struggle, dedicating our lives, but this rotten flunkeyism has become so ingrained in the minds of our nation over the centuries, that it is not easy to root it out. The lukewarm attitudes taken by our people tonight show this. Though it is painful, we have to admit that there are still the remnants of flunkeyism in ourselves, and must resolve to fight it.

"I'm telling you this because it is a comradely obligation to call your attention to this point."

Kim Hyong Jik finished what he had wanted to say. There was a profound silence in the vacant classroom. Mr. O jerked up his head and stared sorrowfully at Kim Hyong Jik.

"I've committed a great crime to our association."

Mr. O lowered his head again.

"Ha, ha, ha. Don't say so. If you admit your error, that's enough. You'll bear it in mind, that's all. Well, it's getting late now. Let's go back."

Pang In Su, Cho Pil U and others looked up to Kim Hyong Jik with unbounded reverence.

Kim Hyong Jik stayed in Pyongyang two more days, giving them guidance in their preparations for the coming action. He returned home some 20 days after he had left.

Kim Hyong Jik sent a messenger right away to Hong Jun Gol. Hong Jun Gol came at midnight that day.

The preparations at Songchon were also going ahead well. But there had been an unexpected incident.

According to Hong Jun Gol, yesterday two officials of the Monopoly Bureau Branch had appeared unexpectedly in Wondong village near from the township of Songchon and had started searching every house. The two Japanese searched everybody's pockets and whenever they found any crumbs of tobacco in anyone's, they slapped their faces and fined them scores of *won*. The young villagers who had been making arrangements for an uprising, had been so infuriated at the Japanese outrages that they had hardly been able to stop themselves from hitting back. Then, one of the Jap officials found

an old man with some dried black cocklebur in his tobacco pouch and struck his ear and raised hell, demanding a fine. The old, his nose bleeding, had protested against this wrong, saying, "You bastards, that isn't tobacco, it's cocklebur. You young island barbarian whelps with no known father or mother!"

The Jap official, white with rage, beat the old man to a pulp with his walking stick.

"Kill the bastard!"

Young villagers who could stand no more attacked the Jap and half killed him. Towards evening the police came rushing in and arrested six youths, and the sounds of beating and agonizing cries were heard all day from the jail of the township police station.

Hong Jun Gol went on in excitement.

"Since that incident the Japs have been really running amok, declaring that any people in the county who do not obey Jap law will be punished; and several joint police and Monopoly Bureau teams are now committing outrages in every village in the county. Our people are angrily demanding that we rise up right now. The situation is changing rapidly, and I don't know how to handle it."

Kim Hyong Jik thought for a time and then said.

"We must not take action before the set time. You must remember that your action is a link in a whole chain, and must do your best to hold it back for four days, till National Humiliation Day. But it's a good thing that this incident happened now. As soon as you get back, send our men to all the villages and stop the people from going off half-cocked. Meanwhile, you should lay bare the Japs' barbarities in Wondong village, get up the county people's dander, to get them in a real fighting mood...."

Kim Hyong Jik showed him ways of handling the sudden turn of the situation. Also, he promised to send out tough youths and some older people from Naedong on the day of action to help Hong Jun Gol.

Hong Jun Gol went back that night.

National Humiliation Day was approaching and there was great coming and going of messages, messengers and telegrams.

2

A big market had opened in the township of Songchon that day. From early morning people came flocking in from miles around. The market was boiling. Strangely enough, there were few women but many young and middle-aged men in the market. You could see familiar faces among the crowds. Hong Jun Gol came in carrying a bundle of firewood. Disguised as a middle-aged country woman, Pyon Ok Rim carried a basket of dried bracken on her head, and behind her came Sun Hui from Naedong, with a basket of bell-flower roots under her arm. Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man, Gomannyo's father and older pupils of Myongsin School such as Yong Chun and Gap Dol were all there in the crowd. They had arrived at Chang-gol the night before on Kim Hyong Jik's instructions ready for the action at Songchon.

In addition, young and middle-aged activists brought in folk from Chang-gol and other villages in the county; their eyes shone.

These people made the rounds of the market, and, when they spotted Hong Jun Gol among the firewood dealers, they would approach him unnoticed, whisper a few words and move on. There were huge crowds of people, yet it was much quieter than on any other market day. The people's expressions were tense, and many spoke in undertones. Only venders from other provinces moved about, hawking their wares.

Also remarkable on this day was a large number of Jap policemen and officials of the Monopoly Bureau and tax offices who had appeared early in the morning, and swaggered about the marketplace, rattling their sabres and shouting at people. They were behaving more roughly and outrageously than usual. They even slapped a tax on homemade brooms. And they were frantic in their search for tobacco. They turned over baskets, bundles of firewood, eggs in straw-wrappers, crates of chestnuts and apples and howled at people to open up any bundles of tobacco leaves they had secreted. Kicked and

hit by Japanese boots and sabres, shopping baskets overturned, chestnuts and apples rolled out all over the floor and chickens with their feet tied up cackled noisily. Here and there you could hear Korean faces being slapped. The Japs searched men's tobacco pouches and even below their belts. Whoever resisted was bashed and kicked, and knocked down.

"You thieves, you think you can violate the law of the Greater Empire of Japan unpunished? His Excellency the Governor-General has declared that you will obey Japanese laws or die."

"We'll teach you a lesson today, you bastards; the fellows from the village of Wondong were beaten half to death."

The Japs growled and harassed the people, kicking and hitting out at them. Today, in this marketplace they were aiming to avenge the Monopoly Bureau official who had had a sound thrashing at Wondong.

Biting their lips and clenching their fists, the people focussed their glaring eyes on them. The situation on the marketplace was getting uglier and uglier.

Hong Jun Gol sat down in a corner of the floor where bundles of firewood were on sale, and watched restlessly as the situation developed. His body jerked every time a Jap kicked over a basket or slapped a face. His blood was boiling and his eyes enraged. He had an urge to beat the hell out of them right away. Everything was ready. But there was still a long time to go before noon. He felt as if his whole body would turn to ashes, if he had to wait much longer. His comrades from the villages were agitated and walked up and down past Hong Jun Gol.

At that moment there was a sudden uproar right in the middle of the marketplace. Hong Jun Gol was taken aback and looked in the direction.

A woman's husky protests were alternating with loud screeching Japanese. People rushed towards them.

Gripped by a premonition of disaster Hong Jun Gol ran over to them.

"Please forgive me just this once, sir. My husband is sick in bed, he is so seriously ill, but hasn't been able to get even a dose of medicine. So I came here to sell some dried waste buds of tobacco to buy a bit of medicine for him."

A middle-aged country woman was begging mercy, clinging to a bag grabbed by a young official of the Monopoly Bureau Branch, she was looking up at him with tearful eyes.

"Don't think you can cheat me, you slut. If you can't pay a 30 *won* fine, you'll come along with me and find out what life in prison is like."

The Jap grabbed the woman by the arm and pulled. Planting her feet firmly on the ground, she begged his pardon, but he dragged her away mercilessly.

Hong Jun Gol gave a groan and clenched his fists in spite of himself.

"Let's rise up, Brother!"

Somebody whispered. Presently a number of young men surrounded Hong Jun Gol and stared at him, their eyes filled with rage. Pyon Ok Rim who had stood yonder glared at the violence, her basket in her hands shaking with anger.

"Let's!" was on the tip of Hong Jun Gol's tongue, but he swallowed it and shut his eyes. Still more people were expected. And the townsfolk were supposed to come out as soon as the noon siren sounded. Let's hold on just a bit longer, Hong Jun Gol thought. Mr. Kim advised me not to act rashly in any circumstances.

"Let's act as scheduled. Now, all of you, disperse and hold your own groups of villagers in check."

Hong Jun Gol said this in a trembling voice, and then returned slowly to his pile of firewood. Watching him from behind, Pyon Ok Rim nodded her head.

As noon drew near, crowds grew in the marketplace and every street in Songchon was flooded with people.

Suddenly the noon siren wailed out, bursting on their ears. Hong Jun Gol's eyes flashed like a lightning; he rose up as if on the spring and went over to the centre of the marketplace. Pyon Ok Rim who had been squatting in front of her basket by an ox-cart brought in by a youth from Changgol, stood up and watched Hong Jun Gol. He walked over to her and said under his breath.

"Right."

"Yes!"

Ok Rim's serene eyes blushed with excitement. The people were making for the middle of the marketplace. Ok Rim climbed agilely up on the ox-cart beside which she had been standing.

A number of young people from Chang-gol stood round it to protect her. Sun Hui watched her by the ox-cart. Basket under arm, Ok Rim gave a sweeping glance over the seething, boiling marketplace. Her eyes shone. Quietening her throbbing heart, she opened her mouth.

"Villagers!"

Her clear voice rang across the marketplace, the people who had been huddled near by looked towards the ox-cart.

"Villagers!"

Ok Rim shouted again.

"Who could that woman be?"

There were wondering whispers coming from among the crowd. Everybody in the marketplace stared at the woman and came closer to her.

"A short while ago we witnessed intolerable violence from a Jap. With his beastly hands and feet he beat and trampled down an innocent Korean woman and dragged her away. I could see that her face was bleeding. What was her crime? Her husband is sick in bed, on the brink of death, but he can't afford to get even a dose of medicine because he has no money. The Japs have robbed them of all their tobacco, so this poor woman wanted to sell the dried tobacco buds to buy a dose of medicine for her dying husband. Why should this woman be beaten up by the Jap till she spat up blood?!" Ok Rim cried out with a feeling.

"Stamp the Jap to death this minute!"

"Kill him!"

The masses too burst into rage, shouting and waving their fists.

Hong Jun Gol, who had been looking uneasily at Ok Rim, muttered "You're doing a good job!" to himself. When Ok Rim had volunteered to make a speech, Hong Jun Gol had not been so sure about it, but the way she told what had just happened at the marketplace with such emotion was excellent.

"Villagers, that isn't all."

Ok Rim continued.

"As you all know, a few days ago, in the village of Wondong the Japs beat up an old man almost to death, because he smoked dried cocklebur. On top of this they arrested some young villagers in their police station and I have been told they tortured them nearly to death. And how many people

have been fined or beaten in this marketplace today? How miserable, and angry we were! And it is not the wretchedness of one or two of us Koreans; All of us here, and every single one of the Korean people is in the same miserable plight. We have to work and sweat on our farms, and then eat grassroots because we have no food; we grow cotton and hemp, and then we have to live in rags because we have nothing to wear. Not only that. Our lot as Koreans is such that if we utter a single word of protest or merely grumble about the thieving Japs, we are flogged and thrown into prison. Now the Koreans have become a pitiable people without a country, with no sky to look up at or soil to set foot on."

Ok Rim stopped and looked round the marketplace. Countless eyes burning with anger were glued on her. Ok Rim's face flushed up and her big black eyes gleamed like fire. She went on.

"Villagers, today is the seventh anniversary of the shameful National Humiliation Day when these island barbarians robbed us of our country. As the days go by, the enemy gets more and more depraved. The Japs starve us Koreans, strip us, beat us, shoot and kill us; they are trying to wipe the Korean nation off the map. Villagers, must we kneel down under the boots of these heinous barbarian Japs? No. We must not. We Koreans are clever people, we have been a nation for five thousand years. How could we be ruined by the hands of the island barbarians? Let's rise up and fight as one man. I have here an appeal addressed to you, fellow countrymen, by patriots who are fighting a bloody battle for our country's independence. The sinister Japs have set up a thieving monopoly of our tobacco, robbing us peasants in Songchon of our traditional livelihood. Only two ways are left to us: to rise up to fight or to sit and starve to death. Let us rise and fight! Smash the tobacco monopoly! Up with the tobacco price! Release the young men arrested in Wondong village immediately! Long live Korean independence! Let's go to the county office, the police station and the Monopoly Bureau! We will not back down. Let us rather go down fighting to the last until we die or our demands are met!"

And then Ok Rim pulled the handbills out of her basket and threw them in the air, into the crowd. At the same moment Sun Hui, who had been standing below, flung a bundle from her basket, too. Ok Rim and Sun Hui kept scattering the hand-

bills and at the same time handbills shot up from every corner of the marketplace, broadcast into the agitated crowd. All of a sudden a group of people shouted in chorus, "Long live Korean independence!" They were Yong Chun, Gap Dol and other young men from Naedong, who had been right at the centre of the crowd. The masses responded. Loud hurrahs burst out of the marketplace. Taking advantage of this Ok Rim vanished out of sight.

"Go out into the main street!"

"Let's go!"

"Let's teach the Japs a lesson!"

Young people from Chang-gol, Sondol and Yangji Villages, who had been assembled in a corner, began to surge out onto the main street. The peasants and several thousand people who had been boiling with excitement streamed forth in a fury like a turbulent river that had broken through its dam. In no time all the streets of Songchon were drawn into the whirlpool of the demonstration.

Barely managing to plant himself on the ground in the jostling and sweeping waves of people, Hong Jun Gol stopped to turn round and cried out.

"Miss Ok Rim, don't follow us. Run for it!"

She was dashing forward in the van of a group of women. Apparently she hadn't heard Hong Jun Gol, for she was talking loudly to the women flanking her.

"Miss Ok Rim!"

Hong Jun Gol grabbed her hand as she came near him. She shrank back and stared at him. Her serene eyes were bloodshot and feverish.

"Get out of here in a hurry, Miss Ok Rim. You are in danger."

"No, I won't."

"You must."

Hong Jun Gol was adamant.

Ok Rim's lips twitched before she said.

"Please let me follow you. I can't drop out."

Ok Rim's eyes entreated. Before these eyes of hers Hong Jun Gol was helpless.

He let go of her hand, swung round and bounced forward. He was followed by Ok Rim. The procession pressing ahead through the narrow street swelled gradually, joined in by new

streams of people gushing out of every corner of the street.

At the news of this critical development, several policemen came running. But the human avalanche was so formidable that they just stood there, stupefied and then fled.

The three buildings with corrugated-iron roofs which housed Japanese imperial offices stood side by side in the middle of the main street, and they were now surrounded by huge crowds. Wave after wave of people kept arriving and roared furiously, as if they would break into the buildings at any moment, shouting their demands. Armed policemen dashed out of the police station, rattling their rifles and fired blanks over the crowd. Instantly the people became quiet and began to edge back.

"Disperse. Or we'll shoot the lot of you!" howled a Jap in a police inspector's uniform.

There was dead silence in the street.

Hong Jun Gol who had been running in the front ranks with the youths from Chang-gol, Yangji and Sondol Villages, glared at the firing police and roared out.

"Ul Sok! Sun Chol!"

"Yes, sir!"

Two voices answered almost simultaneously; the young man who had gone to Ok Rim's on errands for Hong Jun Gol last year and another youth came out quickly to Hong.

"Ul Sok, run over to the Uncle Ho from Naedong on the left flank, and Sun Chol, you go to the people from Wondong Village on the right! And tell them to press up against the wall of the police station and county office all together, to push ahead and have a showdown even if we are shot and fall. Understand?"

"Yes, sir!"

And the two youths ran like a wind.

Turning round Hong Jun Gol raised his arm over his head and cried.

"Everybody, press ahead—"

Responding cries came out of the masses.

"Let's press ahead—"

"We'd rather die than back down now—"

"Beat the Japs to death—"

"Hurrah—"

With loud cries the waves of people advanced angrily. The crowd on both flanks of the procession moved ahead in angry billows. The county office, the police station and the Monopoly Bureau Branch seemed to be sucked into the frantic human sea.

The demoralized police in the yard of the police station, fired a few more blanks. But when the masses charged without letup they were frightened and ran back into the building.

The masses of people tightened their encirclement ring. They got to the brick walls enclosing the three office buildings and swayed violently like an angry sea. From high ground the three buildings where the enemies of the people were entrenched might have looked like toys doomed to be washed away by tidal waves. The masses repeated their outcries.

"Down with the monopoly!"

"Up with the price!"

"Release the prisoners now!"

The enemy stronghold, gun muzzles sticking out of every window shook and creaked as if it would collapse.

All the Japanese from the county office and Monopoly Bureau Branch had been gathered at the police station. The governor of the county, the manager of the Monopoly Bureau and other highranking officials were huddled in the chief of police's office, sweating and looking fearfully at the rattling windows. The chief of police with his long, dignified moustache was frantically rattling the receiver rest on the wall telephone, shouting "Hello, hello!" into it. And when he couldn't get a squeak out of it he threw down the receiver, growling, "God damn them! They have cut the line."

Many frightened eyes were turned to the chief. Holding his sword hilt tightly with his spotlessly gloved hand, he glared at the window in the direction of the general outcry. He gritted his teeth, a disreputable fellow with a sinister protruding side tooth.

"What do we do now, Mr. Kanda?" The slim county governor in his frock coat asked him in a trembling voice, getting to his feet.

"What shall we do? Why, have a showdown, like true men of Japan!" The police chief's expression was grim.

"What do you mean, a showdown? You fired on them just now." The corpulent Monopoly Bureau Branch manager got hurriedly to his feet, his hands shaking.

"Don't be a coward. Do you intend to give in, then, to the common herd? Hey, sergeant, order them to fire."

"Order them to fire, sir?"

The lanky police sergeant looked as if his eyes would pop out.

"Come with me, you blockhead. And you'd all better be ready for a showdown."

The police chief drew his sword and went out through the door into the passage; all the others stayed behind paralyzed by fear.

Presently they heard rifle shots. The Japs in the police chief's room were terror-struck; the demonstrators' shouts grew still more furious; then the glass in the windows began to shatter falling inward followed by a hail of stones. Shrieking, the Monopoly Bureau Branch manager covered his face with both his hands and got down on the floor. The hail of stones continued onto the roofs, through the windows and into the room, and the cries outside got louder and louder. The confused county governor who had been crouched on all fours under the desk suddenly got up, jerked the door open and ran into the passage. The police chief was commanding the firing near the outer door. He ordered, "Fire! Fire!" but the policemen could not get their heads up under the shower of stones. The clamorous police chief stood close to the wall, his hand held to the left side of his forehead which was bleeding.

"Hey, chief, stop the firing!"

"Stop the firing? And what then?" The police chief shouted back, but his face was yellow with fear, utterly bereft now of that pathetic dignity with which he had started the showdown.

"Let's stop and save the situation. Do we want all our people killed by the mob? We'll have to do what we can to save the situation for the present. Can't you see that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't duck down—get your head up and take a look!"

Timidly the police chief raised his head and looked through the window. And as he looked his eyes grew round with naked fear. For the front gates of the police station and county office had been destroyed, and the loudly shouting crowd was streaming into the yard armed with sticks, shovels, pickaxes and pitchforks—anything they could lay hands on. The stones kept flying in. The terrified police chief could almost

see one of those pitchforks glittering in the sun there, winding up in his guts. His hand crept up to his abdomen protectively as he faltered out.

"Cease fire...."

Meanwhile, Hong Jun Gol had made sure that the masses outside stayed close to the wall and also kept the fire in the check with a rain of stones; then he led young people into the yard of the police station. Meanwhile the left flank under Ho Gi Son broke down the front gate of the county office and flooded into the yard. He had determined that, if need be, they should dash in and knock the hell out of the enemies. But suddenly the firing stopped. Hong Jun Gol did not quite know what it meant, but he held the masses in check. Since the enemies had been completely surrounded they could wipe them out any time they wanted. So he made the people shout their demands in higher spirits.

Before long the entrance door of the police station with broken glass creaked open and a uniformed Jap appeared. He howled.

"The Honourable Governor of County proposes to hold negotiations. Send in your deputy."

The masses became quiet.

Hong Jun Gol got tense and glared hard at the fellow, and then looked over the shoulder and nodded at a young man from Chang-gol, who, remaining among the people, cupped his mouth with his hands and shouted.

"We have no deputy. No negotiation is necessary. Let the county governor and the Monopoly Bureau Branch manager come out and hear our demands!"

"Let's have the county governor out."

"Send out Monopoly Bureau manager."

"If you don't we'll knock the buildings down."

Hong Jun Gol was satisfied to hear his comrades shouting here and there out of the crowd, and the masses responding with roars of fury.

The Jap ran back into the building, fear-stricken. The crowd threatened to break in and got more and more excited.

Presently the county governor and Monopoly Bureau manager came nervously out into the yard, their legs were trembling as if they had a fever. The governor straightened up and opened his mouth. The crowd became silent.

"Erh—it is very regretful that this unhappy incident has occurred in my county. If you people of my county have any complaint you should have expressed it in a reasonable manner and we could have talked the matter over. In my opinion, this unfortunate incident is harmful to both sides. I fully understand your wish, so I'll settle the matter properly...."

As the fellow spoke tediously a voice shouted. "Don't give us that stuff, and just answer yes or no!"

This made the crowd repeat their angry shouts.

"Abolish the monopoly!"

"Raise the tobacco price!"

"Release the people in Wondong!"

"Stop the Jap outrages!"

"Ain't you going to answer?"

"We'll have to kill the bastard first."

The masses roared and drew nearer and nearer. Stones came hurtling through the air and fell around the county governor. He was frightened out of his wits and waved his hands and pulled in his head.

"Just a moment.... Please stop, for God's sake. I said I'd accept your demands, didn't I? I've accepted them. Accepted...."

The disconcerted governor bowed in every direction, and promised to raise the tobacco price, ban Jap outrages and set villagers of Wondong free.

"Then bring the people of Wondong village out here this minute!"

A youth from the village of Wondong shouted.

"Yes, yes...."

The county governor used his smoothest tone of voice and turned round, when someone yelled out, "You stay there. Monopoly Bureau manager, you go in."

The manager, who had stood trembling behind the county governor, hurried into the police station.

There were a few minutes of tense silence. Then the door opened again and a group of people in white staggered out into the yard. They were the young men of Wondong Village. The masses raised cries of joy and surged forth to surround them. "Hurrah—hurrah—" burst out from the exalted masses of people. In the midst of the demonstrators, Hong Jun Gol could hardly check his thrill to see the scene.

"Mr. Hong!"

Somebody whispered. He looked back to find Ok Rim who had come behind him before he knew. Her wet eyes were bright with joy. Hong Jun Gol felt something warm surging up in his heart and a burning sensation in his eyes. He had seen Japs surrendering to Koreans, against their will and though only to save themselves from their immediate danger, it was thrilling to know that however brutal the Japs could be brought down to their knees by the uprising masses. Today, the Japs had knelt down in this township of Songchon, and one day when the whole of the Korean people rose, with Kim Hyong Jik's idea in their burning hearts, the Governor-General, the Emperor, the whole bunch of Jap aggressors would have to surrender to the Korean people and to apologize for their crimes. And until that day, I must never back down in this struggle, I must rather die, thought Hong Jun Gol. Until then, until then....

As he thought of this, Hong Jun Gol looked into Ok Rim's clear shining eyes. Ok Rim, as if she understood his feeling, smiled and asked in undertones.

"They will have risen up at Pyongyang and Seoul too, mustn't they?"

Hong Jun Gol nodded without a word.

The people's hurrahs and shouts were rising to crescendo.

The cries rang through the streets of Pyongyang and Seoul too.

This morning Moran-bong Hill was unusually crowded with people. Moran-bong Hill was known as one of the best beauty spots in Korea, but never had so many people visited it since the Japanese occupation.

Students of both sexes strolled in threes and fours along the base of Chongryu-byok Cliff; young workers sat in groups here and there in the green pine thicket around Ulmildae Pavilion amusing themselves; soberly dressed citizens also seated in circles chatting quietly near the Pubyokru, Choesungdae and all the other pavilions; people sailed upstream along the shoals of Panwol-do Island. As noon approached Moran-bong Hill and the vicinity became positively packed with people.

When the noon siren shook the air over the city, everybody permeated the timber of Moran-bong Hill just as water is

sucked by a sponge. A large crowd of people assembled simultaneously on the wooded crest of the hill from which you had a bird's eye view of all Pyongyang, right to the far bend of the Taedong-gang River and the Sadong plain.

"Now we are going to hold a protest rally on this seventh anniversary of National Humiliation Day...."

From a rise a middle-aged man shouted his loudest, the skirts of his ramie *turumagi* fluttering in the wind. There was thunderous applause.

A student jumped up on the rise and made fiery speech, his cap held in his hand. He was interrupted at every sentence by cheers and hurrahs that shook the hill and the river. Right at the centre of the crowd stood Mr. O, Pang In Su, Cho Pil U and others. They kept giving instructions to some of the students flocking round them, who would dash off through the crowd to unknown destinations.

The rise now being used as a rostrum was taken over by a worker, a woman in a fluttering skirt, a middle-aged gentleman with a decent looking moustache—all the speakers condemned the Japanese imperialists for their crimes and declared that the supreme cause of restoring national rights depended actually on the Koreans' own resolve to fight for it.

When the protest speeches were over an unknown voice shouted "Long live Korean independence!" and the masses responded in unison and surged down the hill into the street like waves of fury.

The police chief of South Pyongan Province was utterly taken aback by this unexpected incident. Only when the avalanche descended on Pyongyang Main and Kirim-ri, did he order full police mobilization, both civil and military. Cars, cavalry and fire engines all rushed towards Moran-bong Hill making a terrific racket.

At that moment handbills showered into the air at every street corner. Passers-by picked up the handbills and cheered. The street was in a complete chaos. Their way was blocked, the cavalry howled desperately urging on their horses with the flap of their swords, and the horses reared and turned round and round.

At precisely the same hour, handbills were being scattered all over the city of Seoul. With the noon siren, batches of handbills flew into the air like flocks of birds in every street

with bangs that sounded like gunfire. In Seoul they used a method of scattering handbills they had used a few years ago during the struggle against the Fair, when under Kim Hyong Jik's leadership they had put the handbills into firecrackers and shot them up. Trams, motor-cars, pedestrians came to a complete standstill, and hurrahs for independence rang through the whole city. The streets of Seoul were buzzing with confusion for a long time, quite out of control.

A grand luncheon was in progress in the sumptuous marble-floored drawing room of the Governor-General's residence, at which everybody who was anybody was present—all the top Japanese officials and upper-class Korean collaborators. Raising a glass of wine as red as the Korean people's blood, the Governor-General was proposing a toast to greet the "seventh anniversary of Korea's annexation to Japan" when the news came like a bolt from the blue. The glass fell from his hand, and as it smashed on the floor the blood-like wine splashed over the marble. Soon the whole drawing room turned into shambles.

3

This day too night came to Naedong, peaceful and quiet as usual. A sickle moon hung in a star-spangled sky, shining over the ripening crops in the Naedong fields. You could clearly feel the first cool wind of autumn in the night. And as the wind blew across the fields the maize and sorghum stalks swayed and rustled. The Yolpa-gang River meandered quietly past the foot of Mt. Ponghwa-san. This soaring mountain threw its shadow on the silent village of Naedong this night like a giant in meditation.

Seated at the desk in the end-room Kim Hyong Jik was teaching his son Korean. He looked as quiet and calm as the village at the foot of the Ponghwa-san. He could remain calm in any situation however critical, or tense; that was one of his qualities. Through the half-opened door he could see Kang Ban Sok ironing a white ramie coat in the main room. Occasionally, she put down the iron to wipe the beads of

perspiration off her forehead and cast a satisfied look through at her son absorbed in writing with a pencil.

Kim Hyong Jik, sitting facing his son, watched his son's plump hand moving the pencil, but his mind was in Songchon, Pyongyang, Seoul where the struggle was going on. He pictured waves of people sweeping down the streets of Songchon, shouts of protest and hurrahs shaking Moran-bong Hill, handbills fluttering over the streets of Seoul like flocks of birds. And he had a vision of his elder brother-in-law, Cha Go Ryun, Won Dong Yu, Commander Chu Pung, Pak Yun Hwan, Yun Sam and others who must be awaiting the signal for launching on struggle on the far northern border along the Amnok-gang, on the vast plain at the foot of Mt. Kuwol-san, on the south coast lapped by the waves—in many parts in and outside the country.

He was very anxious for news about the first phase of the struggle. But he firmly believed in its success. The arrangements were flawless, so the action will definitively be successful, he thought, and even if any unexpected incident takes place in the course of the struggle, the dependable comrades and the masses burning with patriotic zeal will deal with it all right.

Kim Hyong Jik could not leave Naedong because he had to direct the action in many places, and was eagerly awaiting the first messengers.

"Oh, you've finished writing, eh?"

His son laid down his pencil on the desk, sat up and looked at him. This awoke Kim Hyong Jik from his reveries; he picked up the notebook and looked through what his son had written. His son could read and write quite well now, even some quite difficult words, because Kim Hyong Jik had been concentrating on his education since last spring. His wife, who had finished the ironing looked up at her husband checking his son's notebook.

"Now then, read it aloud."

"Yes!" Jung Son got up briskly and took his notebook from his father; his eyes shone. Jung Son straightened himself up, held up the notebook with his arms stretched, and read out in a sonorous voice.

"Hero An Jung Gun loved his country more than his own life. He shot the wicked Jap who swallowed up our country."

"Ha, ha, ha...."

Kim Hyong Jik laughed aloud.

"That's my boy. You write well and read well, son. But, Jung Son...."

Kim Hyong Jik held the boy's shoulders and continued.

"You should learn from Hero An Jung Gun his love for your country and his hatred for the enemy, but you mustn't fight alone like him."

Pursing his lips the son tried hard to grasp the full meaning of what the father had said. Glancing his sensible son, Kim Hyong Jik added.

"You saw the sorghum fields in the front plain, didn't you?"

"I did."

"Have you ever counted the sorghum stalks?"

The father asked questions on a different subject. Without blinking, Jung Son stared full into the father's face and replied, "They are too many to count, Papa."

Kim Hyong Jik grinned.

"You are right. They are too many to count. When you grow up, you must raise as many Korean soldiers as there are sorghum stalks in the front plain and fight together with them. For if you fight alone, you will never be able to wipe out all the Japs, you know."

Jung Son grasped the profound meaning of what the father said, and his eyes glimmered brightly.

"I'll do so, Papa."

Jung Son nodded his head vigorously.

"Good. Well, that's enough for tonight. Go on to bed."

Jung Son closed his notebook and went into the other room. His mother, who had been watching through the door, smiled lovingly at her son.

Kim Hyong Jik picked up a thick book that lay on the desk and opened it. He read a few passages, but he sank in a reflective mood, then he sat looking at the opposite wall. The characters *Chiwon* were written in such a powerful stroke that they looked as if they would fly into the air. At the sight of these characters it seemed to him that he still had thousands of miles to go to attain his aim. The struggle he was waging at present was only the very first step. A revolutionary road thousands of miles long was a road that had to be covered, going through one fierce struggle after another. And there was no alternative. Only when you went fearlessly through

the flames of struggle, only when you walked that road generation after generation, would you achieve your aim; if the father fell into the sea of fire, the son must take over, and if he died in action, then the grandson would carry on the cause.

Now Kim Hyong Jik's thoughts turned on the orientation of the revolutionary movement after the current action had been basically completed. In view of the developments of the present situation, he thought, the centre of revolutionary leadership would presently have to be moved to the northern border area, in order to link the revolutionary movement at home with the independence movement abroad, and particularly, to coordinate and give unified guidance to the political enlightenment movement and the armed wing, it seemed unreasonable to keep the leadership in a place deep in the homeland which, while under the enemy's watchful eye, was also geographically inconvenient. He also had an idea of expanding and strengthening mass activity radically, and on this basis reinforcing and building up the armed forces. He felt that our independent forces to be displayed when a golden opportunity had arrived for the revolutionary movement would be 20 million people rallied around the armed units, ready to fight the final decisive battle.

"Sun Hui's father and the others are coming back tonight?" asked Kang Ban Sok hesitantly, looking into the room; she had neatly pressed her husband's ramie *turumagi,* put it on the clothes rack, and spread out his cotton jacket. Kim Hyong Jik awakened from his thoughts, looked down into the other room. She is so considerate, he thought. She always knows what is going on even though I don't myself inform her.

"Yes, they are definitely coming back."

"When they get back, please bring them all here for I've prepared a simple supper for them."

"Supper?" said Kim Hyong Jik.

"Yes."

"Thank you. I never thought of that...." Kim Hyong Jik looked gratefully at his wife who was still ironing.

"I'm going out just for a few minutes."

Kim Hyong Jik got up and went out of the door. He had no particular place to go, and he walked leisurely along the road towards the plain in front of the village. A bleak autumn wind was blowing.

A few white figures came into view in the distance and

soon their shuffling feet and voices could be heard. Kim Hyong Jik stared hard into the dim moonlight before striding quickly ahead.

"Why, look, Mr. Kim is coming!"

"Really?"

"Mr. Kim—"

They had spotted him first and ran to meet him, making quite a noise. Yong Chun, Sun Hui and Gap Dol were the first to come up and bowed to him, saying, "We have come back, sir."

"Oh, I thank you."

Kim Hyong Jik was glad to see them back and held the shoulders of the three students.

"We are back now, sir."

Ho Gi Son, Chun Bo and Sok Man greeted Kim Hyong Jik with emotion, coming close to him.

"So you all have returned safely."

Kim Hyong Jik was very pleased and shook hands warmly with each of them.

"Why are you limping, Yong Chun's father?"

Kim Hyong Jik asked as he saw Choe Sok Man limp forward to shake hands with him. Choe Sok Man was disconcerted and replied falteringly.

"Well, I jumped into the yard of the police station and... erh... stepped on a nail."

"No, sir. Yong Chun's father was shot on the leg by the Japs."

Sun Hui revealed the truth, staring at Kim Hyong Jik.

"My God, when was I hit by a bullet? Erh, didn't I say to you not to tell Mr. Kim about it?"

Choe Sok Man was at a loss and glared at Sun Hui.

"Is the wound deep? Let's go in. It will need dressing." Kim Hyong Jik went over to Choe Sok Man looking worried.

"Don't you worry, sir. It's only slight. Honestly. I could turn round and ran all the way to Songchon this minute."

Choe Sok Man excused himself and withdrew. And Ho Gi Son said.

"Please don't worry, sir. A bullet scratched his calf. It didn't bleed a lot."

This explanation relieved Kim Hyong Jik a bit.

"It's lucky. But, at any rate, you've got to get it dressed immediately. Well, was there heavy firing from the enemy?"

Now it was So Chun Bo who answered.

"We attacked them so hard that they fired blind and soon put up their hands. Only a few people wounded on our side." "Humph, I found out that I could turn the Jap bastards round my little finger. But how we feared and trembled before." Choe Sok Man added.

As they walked towards the village Ho Gi Son gave a detailed account of the day's action. Kim Hyong Jik was well satisfied, seeing the vision of Hong Jun Gol, Pyon Ok Rim and the rest of the comrades in Songchon.

"You fought well. Let's go into my house. You must be hungry...."

Kim Hyong Jik suggested on reaching the outskirts of the village and preceded them. The group of people were so deeply touched by his kindly parental care that they followed him, forgetting to decline his invitation.

They were eating supper at the main room, attended cordially by Kang Ban Sok.

Kim Hyong Jik sat down at the desk in the end room and wrote a letter to Hong Jun Gol. He detailed the security measures that should be taken after the action. Among others, he instructed Hong Jun Gol: to be aware of a possible hunt by the frenzied enemy; to take steps to make sure that our organization could not be exposed; to help any comrades who had been exposed to take flight to Chientao; meanwhile, to draw those tested during the struggle into the KNA and to continue expanding and strengthening our organization.... He finished writing the letter as they finished their supper at the other room. He asked Yong Chun and Gap Dol to come in. He stared at the two young men for a while and asked.

"Aren't you tired?"

"No, sir."

They answered briskly in chorus.

"Do you think you could go to Chang-gol in Songchon now?"

"Yes, sir."

"We can make ten trips even, sir."

"Good. Then, you must do me a favour."

Kim Hyong Jik produced the letter and instructed the young men to deliver it to Hong Jun Gol.

The two lads left right away, though Kim Hyong Jik had advised them to have a short sleep before leaving. Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo and Choe Sok Man went home.

The messengers from Pyongyang and Seoul whom Kim Hyong Jik had awaited in suspense arrived near dawn. Cho Pil U brought in the messenger from Seoul. This messenger was the doctor at the Severance Hospital who had treated Kim Sok Ha's wound during Kim Hyong Jik's stay at the city last summer. He had gone to Pyongyang on the night train and come straight from the railway station, accompanied by Cho Pil U.

The actions at Pyongyang and Seoul had also been successful.

Having heard their detailed accounts Kim Hyong Jik gave them a careful account of future policy and action. And he entrusted Cho Pil U with sending coded telegram to comrades in other places. Some of them said, "Commerce went well here. Increase yours as scheduled." or "Barometer high. Good for agriculture."

Cho Pil U and the messenger from Seoul went back that day.

Like fire arrows flying into the black night sky over Korea, the radio waves sent by Kim Hyong Jik flew across the country, right to the northern and southern ends of the peninsula.

At every major port along the south coast the stevedores threw down their loads and sat down, shouting, "Don't take away Korea's rice!" "Raise our wages!"

The peasants on the Honam and Chaeryong plains demanded the return of the lost land and surged to the county offices and scattered handbills in every street. Intimidating letters kept flying into the courtyards of the residences of the Japanese Governor-General, Superintendent-General of the Police and other vicious Jap officials and their malicious running dogs.

All this astounded the Governor-General, the Superintendent-General of the Police and other ringleaders of aggression who had been stroking their potbellies, contented that the occupation of Korea had passed the crisis stage. To them it was a bolt from the blue. Vain were their frenzied endeavours to find a clue; everywhere the iron fists hit them hard, taking them unawares on the sides or the backs of their heads and vanishing out of sight. Was this a sporadic explosion of the

people's pent-up anti-Japanese feeling touched off by National Humiliation Day? Or was there some tremendous organized force behind it? They were utterly perplexed. How could such a force emerge out of this wilderness where not only all political organizations but even enlightenment associations and even pro-Japanese hireling societies had been wiped out? Then, should this be regarded as of the same nature as that of the intermittent anti-Japanese riots that had occurred at many places on National Humiliation Day most years?

The handbills even thrown into their lairs made the confused enemy's eyes pop out of their sockets, and they scurried about madly but found no clues.

But all the battlegrounds were linked up with Naedong. For nearly a month now Kim Hyong Jik had been directing the actions, sitting through almost every night; people came and went, so did telegrams and messages without interruption.

When Myongsin School was about to open, the first stage was completed. Kim Hyong Jik summed up the struggle and analyzed the experiences and lessons, and was already conceiving a line of action for the next stage.

Through this struggle the withered independence movement reached its full stature and the Japanese aggressors were stupefied at the sudden blows. The membership of the KNA expanded and strengthened and various mass organizations came into being, like mushrooms after rain. The whole of the nation was enlivened like the good earth in the spring.

Now the fight must move on to the next stage, and without delay. Kim Hyong Jik was making arrangements to hold a meeting soon, at which the comrades in all parts of the country would be represented to sum up the current position and define new tasks.

4

The autumn was advancing, and Myongsin School had opened several days ago.

Now that the preparations for the meeting were finished, Kim Hyong Jik sent messages to the comrades at home and abroad.

One day at midnight a KNA member came from Unryul, his face deadly pale. He said that a few days ago wholesale arrests had suddenly begun all over Hwanghae Province. Pak Yun Hwan and many other members of the KNA had been arrested and more and more people were being taken—there had been a spy among the parents of pupils of a private school. Pak Yun Hwan had got a message out of jail, informing that fortunately this secret agent only knew our network in a certain area, that the arrested would fight firmly to the end and that other areas were no likely to be affected but full precautions should be taken and, particularly, Kim Hyong Jik was advised to go hiding immediately lest the worst might happen.

The news plunged Kim Hyong Jik into a meditative mood. He asked the messenger for details of the situation in Hwanghae Province, and showed him how to save the remaining comrades and sent him back that very night. As for himself he decided to rescue the organizations of the KNA from wholesale arrest at the risk of his life. That night he wrote coded telegrams and messages to be dispatched to different places. Needless to say, the meeting had to be postponed. At dawn he called up some people and sent them out on errands.

And that night Kim Hyong Jik sent Yong Chun and Gap Dol to Pyongyang and Songchon for Pang In Su and Hong Jun Gol. He asked Pang In Su to go to Seoul and Hong Jun Gol to Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces to save the situation.

Kim Hyong Jik waited for their information in a strained frame of mind. He was resolved to break through the grim trials awaiting himself and his organization. Outwardly, however, life in Naedong Village was tranquil and normal as ever. As usual, you could hear the bugle blown by Kim Hyong Jik at dawn, and in the daytime resonant voices reading books at the school.

One afternoon the pupils assembled on the school grounds for physical training and waited for the teacher to come.

"Attention—salute!"

Gap Dol gave a command in a stentorian voice as he saw the teacher open one of the classroom doors and come out onto the earthen bank.

Returning the salute Kim Hyong Jik ran his eyes over the pupils and said.

"For today's physical training we are going boating on the Yolpa-gang."

The pupils raised shouts of joy.

"Disperse now, and go home and bring anything you can row the boats with."

The youngsters all stared at the teacher dubiously.

"You mean there are oars on the boats, eh? But we need some more, so go bring them right now."

The pupils scattered noisily.

Two empty boats were tied up at Maekjon ferry. Kim Hyong Jik divided the pupils into two groups, seven or eight to a boat. Kim Hyong Jik got in the boat in Yong Chun's charge. The sky was overcast, but the water was blue and clear. Fat fish were seen frolicking under the water. The two boats floated on the water.

"Well, then, we are going to have a boat race today. Row up to the end of that cliff yonder and back."

Now the youngsters understood why the teacher had asked them to bring the instruments to row boats, and shouted hurrahs. Each group boasted that they would win. The end of the precipitous cliff on the riverbank was far downstream.

"Start!"

As the teacher gave a shout of command the boats began to move; the children seated on both sides of each boat worked their pieces of board simultaneously shouting, "Yo-ho, yo-ho!" The scull originally attached to the stern of each boat was taken up by the strongest member of each crew. The boats shot downstream like arrows. The wind was fair.

"Yo-ho, yo-ho!"

The pupils' cheerful and light shouts seemed to make the boats still faster. The boat carrying the teacher got to the cliff end first and turned round; the second boat quickly caught up with the first. But as they started moving upstream, their speed dropped suddenly. They were also rowing against the wind now. Fierce waves hit their bows. The youngsters, flustered, had to use their breath on rowing, with none left for shouting. As the bows swayed, the boats were pushed back by the waves. Seeing this Kim Hyong Jik commanded in a pitched-up voice that rang across the surface of the water.

"Calm down. Stick to your positions and hold on to your oars. Chiefs of crews, lead the movement, and all the rest of you, work your oars in time, pooling your strength—"

Then the pupils recovered their composure. Yong Chun and Gap Dol standing on the stern of each boat gripped the scull and shouted "Yo-ho—",to lead the movement of the crews.

The waves continued to strike at their bows. Gazing at the waves, Kim Hyong Jik sank in thought. The waves of the enemy's wholesale arrest were sweeping Kyonggi, Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces like these savage waves here. You couldn't tell when the waves would surge up to the north. At this moment the comrades in various places in the north and south must be working desperately under his instructions to minimize our losses, preserve our organizations and comrades and to tide us over. Ho Gi Son who had been to Pyongyang on a liaison mission had conveyed to him Mr. O's earnest advice to escape immediately because the enemy's blood was up, but he would not accept it. Strong measures would now be needed to protect the organizations and the comrades in Pyongan Province. He had not been informed of the implementation of his instructions sent out to Seoul and Kyongsang Province through Pang In Su and Hong Jun Gol and to other places. He could not leave this place before the organizations and the comrades had been rescued.

However fierce the waves, I'll break through them! He firmly decided to himself, staring at the savage waves breaking against the stem.

The pupils' shouts grew weaker and weaker. The sweat streamed down the faces of the crews who worked with their lips tightly closed. The wind howled more frenziedly as if resolved to overturn the boats. They moved upstream slower and slower. Kim Hyong Jik raised his head and looked ahead determined. Maekjon ferry was still far away. They had to negotiate the boiling rapids which roared and swept down furiously. Kim Hyong Jik sprang to his feet.

"Is it hard for you to row?"

"Yes, sir."

Several children answered.

"Is it harder to go upstream than downstream?"

"Many times harder, sir."

"Why is it?"

"Because we must go against the rough streams."

Gap Dol replied aloud from the other boat.

"But what would happen if we gave up rowing and sat with folded arms?"

"We would float down, sir." Sun Hui answered on this boat.

"Yes. You can't tell where we would float to. The boats might hit rocks on their way and be smashed to pieces or flow out to sea, and we might not be able to return for ever. Then what should we do to get back to Maekjon ferry?"

The youngsters stared up at the teacher without a word.

"You must not back down, you must fight the waves. You must row desperately. The same is true of the work of getting back our lost country. Just like this boat, Korea is being pushed downstream by rapid waves of ruin. If you leave her alone, she will just float on down and we would lose the way ever to restore her. However hard, we must row desperately in the teeth of the fierce waves and get our country to the bank of liberation, mustn't we?"

"We must, sir!"

The pupils replied in chorus, looking up at the teacher with feverish twinkling eyes.

"Well, here we are at the neck of the rapids. Row together. Yo-ho!"

Kim Hyong Jik shouted aloud to beat time.

"Yo-ho, yo-ho—"

The children responded and rowed vigorously. The heads of the boats jerked up and moved ahead, breaking powerfully into currents. The sweat poured down the children's reddened faces. But their black eyes burned with will and power and hope.

"Work a bit harder, yo-ho—"

Kim Hyong Jik beat time.

"Yo-ho—"

The pupils raised their voices energetically. The shouts echoed powerfully to the cliff and the boats broke through the rough rapids. After the rapids the river widened and the soft waves flowed gently down. Yet the youngsters worked the oars vigorously, without slackening their elated spirits. Maekjon ferry was drawing near. Kim Hyong Jik was happy to see the two boats make it and asked calmly.

"Well, your efforts were fruitful, weren't they?"

"Yes, sir—"

The answer was made in unison, and young eyes full of joy stared at the teacher.

"Yes. As men we must always live this way; it's worth living like this. We must set a great, genuine goal for the country and the people and go forward through stormy waves towards this goal however hard it may be."

"We understand, sir—"

Their unanimous reply echoed to the cliff and then far out into the stream.

"Well, then, Maekjon ferry is right ahead of us. Just one more heave and we'll be there."

The boats shot upstream.

Kim Hyong Jik remained standing on the stem and looking up far into the sky. He could vividly see his revolutionary comrades all over the country going through the furious waves of repression.

Comrades, it is we who have brought about this revolutionary storm, he declared to himself. Let's keep rowing our boat undaunted, however fierce the stormy waves. The storm and the waves will get rougher. But only when we break through them, will we be able to reach the bright shore of national liberation.

He thought he must encourage his comrades more and give them a clearer orientation, so that they could face the coming trials without the slightest wavering.

After school Kim Hyong Jik wrote a number of letters to Cho Pil U in Pyongyang, Pyon Ok Rim in Songchon and to those in Anju and Kaechon. He went into every last detail about how to protect the organizations and the comrades, because the whirlwind of wholesale arrest might well spread north. Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man were sent out, the former to Kaechon and Anju via Pyongyang and the latter to Songchon. Kim Hyong Jik had the intention of moving to the border area by the Amnok-gang River as had been planned, as soon as these two and the comrades dispatched to the south were back.

5

"Stop working and go home, madam. It's nearly noon, and you must give Mr. Kim his lunch, mustn't you?" called Goman-

nyo's mother, sorry to see Kang Ban Sok digging sweet potatoes with a hand-hoe smeared with yellow dirt. Kang Ban Sok piled up the ripened giant sweet potatoes in a furrow which had just been cleared. Raising her head, her forehead covered in beads of perspiration, she smiled and said.

"That's all right. These are so good, and it's rather interesting to dig them."

"This is a very good year, indeed. A good year for sweet potatoes in Naedong. Ours are as big as Gomannyo's," said Sun Hui's mother, stretching herself from removing sweet potato tops from the opposite direction.

"We owe all this to you, madam. As soon as you moved to our village, you helped us to develop the buds, plant the saplings, and taught us how to tend them. If you had not watched over our sweet potato growing in this village all spring and the summer, we could never have had a crop like this, you know."

"Yes, indeed. You should cook dinner for her today, Gomannyo's mother," said Gap Dol's mother who was digging up potatoes on the opposite side, teasingly.

"Why not? I'm going to steam a couple of potfuls this evening, so come on over to my house. And you must come and bring Jung Son, madam."

"Thank you, I will."

"Now, please go back quickly, madam."

"Oh no, I'll just finish with this furrow."

The women resumed their work. And in fact it did seem it was noon. Kang Ban Sok hurried up with her work to finish the last furrow and go home when she heard her son calling "Mama—" from the edge of the field.

Jung Son was standing there.

"Chol Ju woke up. I gave him jujubes, but he threw them away."

His vest pockets were bulging, full of wild jujubes.

"Please go home, madam."

Gomannyo's mother urged; she looked awfully sorry.

"Oh, what a boy, why couldn't he sleep a bit longer? Well then I'll be going. See you again."

Kang Ban Sok untied the towel that covered her head, dusted her clothes with it and walked towards the edge of the field.

"Mama, give me the hoe. I'll finish the digging for you."

Jung Son stretched out his plump hand bruised from picking the wild jujubes.

"All right. But don't dig. Help them to gather the sweet potatoes."

"I will."

Her son was delighted and bounced off to the field.

"Oh, never mind. Why not go and play, my boy?"

"I played enough. Oh, look, how big the potatoes are! Shall I pile them up here?"

"Oh, you needn't do that, really, my boy.... Like father like son, they say.... What a nice boy he is.... The little children in the village can't go up the hills themselves; so he takes them up there and picks pocketfuls of wild jujubes for them. My Gomannyo follows him like his shadow, calling him, 'Brother, brother'...."

Kang Ban Sok heard this talk behind her as she hurried home. She carried Chol Ju on her back, went into the kitchen and built a fire in the fireplace. She put some bowls of rice in the big rice pot and then boiled soup. She crouched in front of the fireplace. She could hear voices reading in the school. She pushed dry pine-needles into the fireplace with a poker and listened to the voices.

Pang In Su whom her husband had awaited with anxiety had returned last night. It seemed that on the whole things had been put right there. Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man were also back. So now, her husband was only waiting for Hong Jun Gol. She was worried about her husband's safety. After long hesitation she had suggested to her husband that it would be well for him to go into hiding for a time, but he had smiled faintly and said.

"Protecting our organization is more important than hiding to protect myself. Don't worry. When Mr. Hong comes back I'll go, so make a few preparations for me."

She knew all too well that her husband could not be persuaded, and yet, she was worried by his lack of care for his own safety.

As the soup began to boil, she rose and went out, a water jar under her arm. At that moment she heard the sound of galloping horses from Tongkyon Village. An ominous presentiment gripped her heart. She put down the water jar on the earthen bank, and standing by the door, watched the neigh-

bourhood. Three riders galloped up the ox-cart road to the school, raising the dust. Instinctively she looked towards the classroom. The voices reading were as resonant as ever.

"Husband!"

Kang Ban Sok cried and ran a few steps towards the school, but the Jap police were already off their horses by the yard and rushing in. Two policemen stood facing the classroom doors, levelling their rifles with mounted bayonets while a sinister-looking man in plain clothes stepped on the earthen bank leaning on a walking stick. He pushed the door open and went into the classroom.

The children's voices stopped and there was silence. But a silence so oppressive to Kang Ban Sok that she could hardly breathe. Then there were shouts of challenge from inside.

"How dare you come in here? In your dirty boots. This place is sacrosanct, it is a place of learning. Get out of here this minute!"

The plain-clothed policeman who had brazenly walked in stepped back like a frightened dog slinking away, his tail between his legs, almost falling off the earthen bank. Then he recovered his composure. He stepped down to the yard and tried hard to put on airs. Now Kim Hyong Jik slowly put on his shoes and stood on the earthen bank. The uniformed policemen picked their guns hurriedly and pointed them at Kim Hyong Jik. But he did not even look at them and faced the plain-clothed man.

"Why are you here?"

Kim Hyong Jik's perfect calm and dignity overwhelmed the policeman, who lost his composure and fumbled for a while; then, clearing his throat, he said.

"You must come with us, we won't hold you long. But we have an inquiry to make...."

"Inquiry?" said Kim Hyong Jik with a sharp glance at the fellow. "All right. You'll have to wait; for I must finish the lesson."

As he said this and turned round, all three doors of the classroom were flung open and the pupils poured out noisily.

"Mr. Kim—"

"Don't go, sir!"

"You can't take our teacher away!"

"Oh, no, don't go, sir!"

The elder pupils such as Yong Chun and Gap Dol surrounded the teacher and shouted at the police. Ho Sun Hui and other young children wailed, clinging to their teacher.

Kim Hyong Jik looked tenderly at his pupils. He hugged the clinging children in his arms and closed his eyes for a moment, his heart filled with grief and pain.

It was heart-rending to part with these poor children with nobody to look after them, just like their country, with these lovely youngsters who he had looked after like his own kin. When will I return? He wondered. I shall be living behind bars God knows for how long.

However, Kim Hyong Jik raised his head with a determined air. He looked round the wailing pupils. There was a grim expression in his eyes.

"Boys and girls!"

His tone of voice was tender though stern.

"What is the matter with you? Don't behave like this. Go in and study. I've committed no crime, so I will soon be back. Sun Hui and Yong Chun, now, take your friends in."

Stroking the heads of the children who were reluctant to go, Kim Hyong Jik pushed away one pupil after another before he stepped slowly down into the yard. One of the policemen who had been pointing their guns at him approached him with a rope which had been dangling at his hip.

"Get away. Are you going to tie up an innocent with the rope? I'll come on my own feet."

Kim Hyong Jik reproved sternly with a menacing look. His eyes were aflame with rage. The fellow with a rope was petrified. Soon Kim Hyong Jik found his wife by the twig gate to the inner wing of the school building, and walked several steps towards her.

"Go in and bring me my *turumagi* and hat, would you?"

Kang Ban Sok, who had been at a loss what to do, pulled herself together and went straight into the room. With trembling hands, she took the black *turumagi* and chestnut-coloured hat off the rack and brought them out. He took them leisurely, put them on and turned back to his pupils.

"Go to the classroom and finish your lesson before you go home. You must come to school regularly until I return. Gap Dol and Yong Chun, you must take over for me."

"Sir, if you go...."

Gap Dol and Yong Chun ran to the teacher and looked up at him with tearful eyes.

"You mustn't behave like this. Remember what I said on the Yolpa-gang the other day."

"Yes, sir."

Then Kim Hyong Jik turned to his wife.

"Don't you worry. I'll be back soon. Take care of things here."

Kang Ban Sok just stared at her husband in silence. Her heart sank and she felt dizzy, she could hardly hold herself up.

Now Kim Hyong Jik walked across the yard. The policemen followed him in a flurry. But Kang Ban Sok remained standing without a stir. She bit her lower lip. Her husband was already at the school gate. At this moment, crying out "Papa—" Jung Son came rushing in and hugged him. Then, many villagers poured into the gate. The police howled and shoved them off, but the village folk pushed them aside and flocked round Kim Hyong Jik. He waved his hand to calm them down. He patted his son on the head and soothed him. And he threaded through the crowd and walked slowly out of the gate.

After a few steps he stopped in his walk and looked back for a time.

"Husband!"

Kang Ban Sok cried to herself and stepped forward a few paces, but her feet felt stiff.

"Papa!"

The son again ran after the father. The villagers and pupils followed in wake of Kim Hyong Jik.

Ho Gi Son, who had gone to Chungbami, had been informed of Kim Hyong Jik's arrest belatedly and rushed back in helter-skelter. He could not believe it. Seeing him being escorted away from the outskirts of the village, Ho Gi Son stopped and called out.

"Mr. Kim!"

Everything was dark before his eyes. He stood stupidly for a time in the manner of a man losing his soul. The villagers were on the outskirts of the village and Kim Hyong Jik's figure was receding gradually into the distance. Ho Gi Son came to his senses. His eyes emitted fierce flames of fury.

"No, you can't take him, you blackguards!" he shouted to himself, he ran ahead. He decided to save Kim Hyong Jik

even at the cost of his own life and ran and ran along the road to Maekjon ferry.

Meanwhile, Kang Ban Sok stood in the yard of Myongsin School. Although her husband was long out of sight, she just stood there, petrified. She saw her son trudging along the lane to the spring. Every few steps he looked back. Suddenly the realization hit her what harsh trials faced her now. The son halted a few steps from the mother.

"Mama!"

The son's eyes betrayed his burning anger.

"Jung Son!"

Kang Ban Sok put her arms round him. And stroking his head, she said: "Papa will come back soon. I'm sure he will come back. He'll come back and fight the Japs and fight for our country's independence."

She said this to comfort both her son and herself, and as she said it, looked towards Maekjon ferry. A bleak autumn wind was raising dust over the plain. The villagers and the children who had followed Kim Hyong Jik were seen sadly returning. Almost the whole village had come out—Old Chong Jin Gu who had no time to slip on his *turumagi* had run after Kim Hyong Jik in a horsehair headband, Chun Bo, Sok Man and Gomannyo's father who had sickles in hand and other middle-aged men, Old An Sin Do, Sun Hui and Yong Chun's mothers, Yu Bok's mother from Chungbami and other women.

"What shall we do?"

"Jung Son, those filthy Japs...took away your good father who had done no wrong...."

"Heaven is cruel; I wish thunder would strike all those Japs dead."

"My God, what shall we do, madam?" They wailed and surrounded Kang Ban Sok.

Sun Hui called, "Mother!" and clung to her, sobbing. Duk Bu held Jung Son's shoulder with one hand as with the other, he wiped his streaming tears. At the sight of the villagers Kang Ban Sok came to her senses. She was grateful to them for their love and respect for her husband, and at the same time, she remembered that he had asked her to take care of things here in his stead.

I must not be weak in the enemy's sight, she thought. That is not what my husband would wish. She looked round at the villagers with a serious expression and said quietly.

"Villagers, let's stop behaving like this. What did Jung Son's father tell you when he left? He would be worrying if he knew you are still behaving like this. I think he'll be all right. What will they do with an innocent man? You go home now. And children, you go home now and have your lunch; you must come back to school and carry on with your lessons in the afternoon as the teacher asked you to. Now, Sun Hui, you stop crying first. Come on!"

"Let's not be discouraged as she has advised us. We must have discussion at the school guild to take measures...."

Old Chong Jin Gu said to support Kang Ban Sok, but his face could not hide his despair.

Kang Ban Sok stood vacantly with her son beside the earthen bank. Her limbs went limp and her brains muddled. The inside of the house looked strangely lonely, as if it were uninhabited. She did not know what to do and how. Shall I go into the house? she thought. But what shall I do in an empty house?

Suddenly she remembered that the soup must be ready. She felt as if the most important task was to serve it up, and she walked towards the kitchen. But halfway she stopped. She asked herself what was the good of ladling up the soup now? It seemed to her that there must be urgent things to attend to, but she did not know what. On the edge of the earthen bank she found the water jar which she had brought out earlier to fetch water. With an aching heart she walked into the kitchen, the water jar under her arm.

Then there was a hurried shuffle in the yard and a voice called, "Is madam in?" It was Ho Gi Son. He had been running.

"I'm so dreadfully sorry, madam. I followed them to Maek-jon ferry to try to free Mr. Kim at all costs. He dropped this slip of paper from under his sleeve and; with his eyes signed to me to go back right away, so I couldn't but...."

Ho Gi Son held out the slip of paper. His face was flushed with indignation. Kang Ban Sok took it quickly and opened it.

"Burn papers. Inform Songchon."

The words were barely discernible. It must have been scribbled under his sleeve. She was perplexed particularly by the words "Inform Songchon." But soon she could grasp the meaning. It was obvious that Hong Jun Gol must be informed that he must not visit Naedong on his return to Songchon. Even in his dire straits after his arrest, he had worried about saving his comrade. Kang Ban Sok was very moved by this.

She realized that she must not lose any time.

"I'll take care of the papers. I'm sorry, but would you please go to Songchon? Tell Miss Ok Rim about my husband's arrest and ask her to make sure that Mr. Hong Jun Gol doesn't come to Naedong after his return and that he takes all necessary steps."

"I will. I'll go right out, madam."

He swung round and left.

"Jung Son, go out to the school ground and stand watch for me, will you? If Japs or strangers come, call Chol Ju."

"Yes."

Jung Son who had been seated blankly on the earthen bank ran towards the school ground.

Kang Ban Sok looked round before she hurried to the back of the house. She lifted a slate tile on the eave near the chimney and took out a package of papers. She put an armful of bush clovers into the fireplace and built a fire. Flames shot up instantly. She had taken all the papers out of the package, but she hesitated to thrust them into the fire immediately. Words were written by the finest possible hand. How many nights he had sat up reading mountains of books and groping in contemplation for ten and more years, in order to jot down these words! And how many thousands of miles had he covered to cross and recross the death-line days and nights! She saw vividly her husband's emaciated face, sitting up through nights, with writing brush in hand, unable to write down a word; his figure entering the gate, dripping wet with early morning dew. In fact he had put all his body and soul into each of these words.

Her trembling hands prevented her from putting the papers into the fire. But what else could she do? It was for her husband's sake that she must destroy the papers without a trace. Closing her warming eyes, she put the papers into the flames. They burned to white ashes, and she gazed at them forlorn.

At this moment, she heard horses' hoofs, and Jung Son called "Chol Ju—" dashing into the yard. Kang Ban Sok was taken aback and sprang to her feet. She heard the rough scuff of boots and the door of the room jerked open. Her eyes glimmered like a lightning. She opened the inner kitchen door and went into the room. There was a policeman, his feet planted on the floor.

The policeman had pulled the door so fiercely that the upper hinge had come off and the door was hanging aslant. The desk placed by the door had been upturned, the drawers littered about the room.

Kang Ban Sok's eyes burned with fury.

"What do you want? Breaking into my house like this....

"I came to search your house."

The arrogant policeman remained standing in the room, his dirt-smeared boots glued to the floor. He looked inquiringly round the room. As his eyes rested on the clothes chest, he stepped towards it.

"Get out of here this minute!" Kang Ban Sok shouted angrily. She strode swiftly towards the chest and faced the policeman. He recoiled and stared at her.

"Where will you lay your filthy hands on next?" Her voice was still angrier.

"I'm searching, I said."

She looked so awe-inspiring that the policeman was overwhelmed and stood there, hesitating.

"You island barbarian, is that what you call manners? We know your law is to arrest the innocent, but is it also in accordance with your law to break into others' rooms in dirty boots without permission and lay your hands on their property?"

"Ah, ah, how is that? You are against the law?"

Now the policeman glared.

"The law? Humph! Shut your dirty mouth. No one is safe from your law, the law of robbers, is there? Go ahead and do your worst."

Kang Ban Sok went to the chest, jerked off the cover and grabbed some clothes at random and threw them at the policeman's face.

"Now, look as much as you like!"

"Ah, this...."

The policeman uttered incoherently and winced.

"And you can tear these up and check every tiny bit if you want."

Kang Ban Sok tore up the garment she had in her hand and threw the pieces at the policeman's face.

Jung Son stood beside his mother and glared at the intruder, clenching his fists. The stunned policeman took a step backwards, then another and another until his feet hit the

doorstep and he staggered, almost falling backward into the yard. There was another policeman outside. He appeared to have searched the classroom; the duplicator under his arm, he stood there with a stupid look on his face.

Kang Ban Sok stepped out onto the earthen bank.

"Now, what else do you want to see? This? Here you are!"

She had brought out a sewing basket and threw it at the policeman. Neighbours and pupils who had flocked into the yard, watched her with admiration.

The police realized that for all their swords and guns they were no match to this fiery woman. The one who had intruded the house hurried out of the gate, carrying a few books he had picked up off the desk, the other following in the wake.

Kang Ban Sok followed them up to the school ground. Mounting on their horses, the cops muttered, "Wait and see," and galloped off, raising a cloud of dust.

Finding her son beside her, Kang Ban Sok hugged his shoulders tightly. And glaring at the scoundrels running away, she said emphatically to her son.

"Take a close look at them, son. They are the enemies who took your father away. It is they who give us hard times, who have robbed us of our country. Don't ever forget that, not even for a moment; and you must grow up quickly to deal with those enemies."

"I will, Mama." Jung Son replied, his small fists clenched. He stared hard at the running enemies with burning eyes as if to impress the Japs on his mind for ever.

When she came back to the yard of the house, the women and children were setting things straight in and around the house. As she came in, the villagers just stared at her, not knowing how to comfort her in her misfortune. Kang Ban Sok said quietly.

"Stop tidying up, I'll do it myself. I'm sorry I made a fuss. Those Japs are robbers. They arrest an innocent man and break into his house and make a mess like this. But we must never be afraid of gangsters or kneel down to them. We are the rightful masters of this country and they are robbers who broke in here in broad daylight. So, why should we give way to them? Villagers, you must not be frightened because they wield their swords and guns, arrest people and damage houses. We must rather lift up our hearts, put forth our strength and

live like masters, holding our heads up high. Let us continue to run the school and let the whole village fight in firm unity as before. Gap Dol, and Sun Hui, what are you doing? You should not behave like this, you who were taught by your teacher day and night. Leave the door alone; take your friends inside and learn. That is the way to gladden and help your arrested teacher—and the whole village."

"I understand, madam. Boys and girls, let's go in and get on with our school work!"

Gap Dol shouted with deep emotion, looking around at his colleagues. The children all agreed and ran off into the school.

"And we must keep the evening classes going. I'll teach you from tonight, although I know little. Duk Bu, tell everybody to come tonight." Kang Ban Sok told the boy standing by her.

"Yes, madam." Duk Bu said, his voice trembling but surreptitiously wiping away his tears with the back of his hand. All the neighbours looked at Kang Ban Sok, and tears were ready to well up in their eyes. At that moment a chorus of voices began to sing in the school.

Miserable are we Koreans.
We thrived over four thousand years
Generation after generation.
But what a plight we are now in?

The children's voices sounded pathetic.

The iron chains that bind me hand and foot
My comrades will cut,
And those loud hurrahs for independence
Will move mountains and boil the East Sea.

The song touched the hearts of all those in the yard, and the chorus reverberated round the village. Kang Ban Sok keenly realized now that though her husband might be held behind bars, the great patriotic spirit to fight back against Japan that he had fostered all last year at the base of Mt. Ponghwa-san had, like this song that he had written, taken root, in the minds of all the villagers. She felt her heart warming up and tears welling up in her eyes. But she was strong enough to control her tears. She realized that hers was a heavy

task, for she must lead the villagers to equip themselves with the spirit that her husband had planted.

Her trial, she knew, had only just begun. She could not tell what storms might overtake this village. She determined to stand firm and fight in her husband's stead.

After clearing the supper table, she took off her apron and changed into a cotton skirt and jacket, and went across to the school with her son.

Duk Bu was already there, building a fire in the outside fireplace to heat the classroom floor. Duk Bu had read her determination and had come without a word to help her; she was very grateful for his help. The night before, her husband had told her that if he left for the north, he would take Duk Bu with him so as to train him as an independence fighter. And what shall I do with him? she thought. She went into the classroom and lit the lamp. The windows brightened with light. She came out onto the earthen bank and went to the bell hanging under the eaves. And she looked across at the dark village. Only a few windows were lit, and the only chimney that gave off smoke was that of the landlord Pak Byong Tae's house at Tongkyon Village yonder. The villagers' sorrow of being deprived of Kim Hyong Jik touched Kang Ban Sok's heart. But you couldn't carry on his work by lamenting.

Let us rise up, everybody! she shouted to herself. Let us rise up and be firm and carry on his work!

"Ring the bell." She told her son who was standing beside her.

"Yes."

Jung Son replied briskly, and standing on tiptoe, took hold of the bell rope.

The clear sound of the bell rang through the gloomy village.

"Ring it louder!"

Jung Son rang the bell. Doors rattled open and vigorous footfalls and hum of voices approached the school.

Husband, don't you worry about your work here and fight well, she said to herself. I'll do it for you come what may. And Jung Son pulled at the bell-rope till it echoed loud across the valley.

CHAPTER VIII

ORDEALS

1

The South Pyongan Province Police chief's office had been temporarily taken over by Watanabe, the Superintendent-General of the Police of the Government-General in Korea, who had assumed command of the investigation into the "Korean National Association case". It was a sumptuously furnished room though it inclined towards very gloomy and oppressive.

Watanabe sat behind a huge desk, reading the protocol of the preliminary examinations that had been going on for several days. He read line after line, goggling his bloodshot eyes—he had been short of sleep for a month and more. His frown deepened more and more. He read the protocol right through, then in obvious despair, flung it down on the desk.

"Oh, those blockheads! They haven't made the slightest progress." Watanabe grumbled and stared blankly into thin air. Again the investigation had run into trouble. They had dealt with one difficulty after another but now it seemed that they had really come to a dead stop.

Watanabe was conscious of the blunders he had been making in his handling the Korean National Association case. At first, thanks to their secret agents, they had got a clue to this case in Hwanghae Province, but he had made an irreparable blunder; he should have made all the arrangements watertight. When he had been informed by the Hwanghae Province police chief that an independence movement called the Korean National Association had been active in Hwanghae Province, he had not been at all alarmed, he had just laughed it off. He had simply ordered to arrest Pak Yun Hwan, who was suspected to

be the leader and a few others involved in the case so that they might be dealt with severely, and he had left it at that.

Immediately after the "annexation" in 1910 all organizations involved in the political and cultural enlightenment movements had been wiped out in Korea. And though there had been hundreds of secret associations since, they were only saplings which had not yet struck root. They were easy to weed out, then that was that.

Watanabe had seen the KNA case in Hwanghae Province as just another sapling, and in this he had made a big mistake. The case which involved Kyonggi and three southern provinces, had extended to Pyongyang and the north. And the interrogation of Pastor Paek who had been arrested at the port of Inchon on his way out of the country had revealed that he had been in touch with an organization called the Korean National Association, had had contact with its leader who was not Pak Yun Hwan but Kim Hyong Jik of Myongsin School who had been arrested not long since by the South Pyongan police. An information laid by a landlord named Pak Byong Tae of Naedong, Kangdong County, had led to the arrest but it had not been known that Kim Hyong Jik was the leader of the KNA. Watanabe had been quite shaken when he found this out, the more so that evidence he had got to date indicated that the KNA was no ordinary underground organization, that this was a special case, serious enough to dwarf the countless other cases that had come to light.

Having been severely reprimanded by the Governor-General, Watanabe hastened to Pyongyang, set up his headquarters there to go into the KNA case himself; he had set up a team of detectives in every area, had taken direct control of all enquiries, but so far he had made little progress.

His orders were that evidence or no, arrests should be made on the tiniest suspicion. The South Pyongan police cells were crowded out—more than a hundred men had been arrested. Day in day out the interrogation room resounded with screams of prisoners as the police used every conceivable means of torture, hoping for some scrap of information. Yet they had got little that would be of use and Watanabe was dissatisfied. Those few who it was suspected might know something had told nothing; most had no idea that the KNA existed even, it was so well hidden.

At present Watanabe was trying hard to clarify two things. First he needed to know what kind of organization the KNA was, and how deep its roots. For though Kim Hyong Jik appeared to be known one of the major figures in the KNA, there were clear signs that the organization remained intact, deep rooted far and wide at home and abroad. It was obviously well organized for the minute the police had found a clue in Hwanghae Province, it had all vanished underground and they had searched the area in vain. Whenever a search was made for anyone closely linked with the KNA, they suddenly dropped out of sight, vanished without a trace. And then there had been a whole series of incidents up and down the country in the last two years, particularly since last summer; he had to know if these were connected with the KNA. The independence movement had been active as never before in all the years since annexation and Watanabe's instinct told him what was behind it was almost certainly the KNA. The fact that Kim Hyong Jik, the leader of the KNA, had attended a conference to arrange the citizens' protest meeting at Pyongyang, where he had had a heated argument with Song Se Ho and Pastor Paek from Shanghai tended to confirm his suspicions. And there was no knowing if the KNA had been involved in the handbill case in Seoul on National Humiliation Day, the terror letters thrown into the courtyard of his residence, the peasants disturbances and the troubles with the stevedores in provinces of Kyongsang and Cholla, and for that matter, the riot in Songchon over the tobacco monopoly. In all these cases their authorities had been groping in the dark; they were searching frantically, but on neither point had they come up with any evidence as yet.

A week ago, Watanabe had issued an urgent order to his men. Banging the desk with his fist, he had bellowed:

"You've got the prisoners—concentrate on Kim Hyong Jik, Cho Pil U, Pak Yun Hwan and their closest associates. If you have to, tear them apart, limb from limb but GET ME THAT INFORMATION! If you don't get it in a week it's your heads that will roll."

On Watanabe's desk lay the results, the protocol of the preliminary examinations, a stack of papers as thick as an encyclopedia. But what was in it? Nothing but a lot of dirty marks made by his own frightened men. He was no longer angry with them even, the thing was so hopeless. All through the protocol he could hear the recalcitrant voices of

Kim Hyong Jik and of the hundred others in the case; neither the threat of death nor the most horrible torture had brought them to their knees.

All the inquisitors who had tried to break Kim Hyong Jik had been helpless, overwhelmed even by his eloquence and dignity. They tried to indict him as a criminal, yet before him it was they who stood indicted.

Pak Yun Hwan had consistently denied everything, which left Watanabe's men at a dead end. They could not open his compressed thick lips with a red-hot iron rod or even when red-pepper water burned his throat.

Cho Pil U resisted and fought back. He was a strange fellow; the more savagely they tortured him, the tougher his resistance and the louder he shouted back.

Mr. O was different again. He set his lean body erect and stared calmly, icily at the inquisitors; he said that he knew neither the KNA nor Kim Hyong Jik but that as a teacher who treasured truth and justice, he had had to support his students' righteous action. For the rest he denied everything with great tenacity, resolved that even if he did know anything, which he didn't, after this wild horses wouldn't drag it out of him.

There were some records of tedious and shameful interrogations of Kim Hyong Jik's close associates who had been arrested at Naedong.

Ho Gi Son feigned ignorance, saying he could not understand why they had arrested Kim Hyong Jik who had opened a school to teach poor children, or why an ignorant peasant such as he should be arrested. There was no knowing whether he really had nothing to do with the KNA or if he was playing a very clever part.

Choe Sok Man had been voluble, he answered every question at tremendous length and quite irrelevantly. Asked if he had seen any strangers in his village, he started answering even before the inquisitor had finished his question; using grimaces and gestures in illustration, he told them a long story about the day's drug vendor who had come round the village, how he played the mournful tune of *Arirang* on his violin to get on the right side of the villagers before he tried to sell them his toad's grease, and about how when Gomannyo's puppy followed him, the drug vendor had thrown a stone at him and had broken his leg, and how Gomannyo's grandmother had gone for

him and made a terrific fuss.

This was too much for Watanabe; he got so angry that he struck his desk with his fist.

That was what the whole voluminous protocol of preliminary examinations boiled down to stupid talk. Watanabe sighed and sat staring at the ceiling stupidly. Mentally and physically exhausted for a while, he just sat there like a lost soul.

Suddenly he shot up like a spring, a sinister glint in his eye.

"All right, let's show them. The man isn't born that I can't break. We'll see." He went back to his desk, his saber rattling at his side and pressed the bell. The door opened and the provincial police chief entered.

"Bring in Kim Hyong Jik. I'm going to deal with him myself."

"Kim Hyong Jik?"

The police chief's eyes widened in amazement.

"What's the matter with you? Fetch him in!"

The police chief hurried out, and Watanabe, walked up and down the room with arms folded and spurs rattling.

There was a long corridor at police station cell block with a row of cells on either side, and Kim Hyong Jik was in a solitary cell at the far end. Leaning against the wall, with his arms folded he was looking out through the iron bars. His face was pale, and his emaciated body bruised in many places. But he was composed and his eyes were full of spirit as ever. A two-story brick building was attached to the left corner of the cell block, where the policemen drilled. Today again this building resounded with the shouting of interrogating officers as KNA suspects were examined.

The police chief and the thought control section chief had been in the detectives' room days and nights interrogating suspects. If a suspect refused to answer, detectives would drag him out into the main interrogation room for torture, and screams emanated from there; somebody was obviously being tortured as usual.

Now Kim Hyong Jik was sitting quietly, deep in thought.

Cho Pil U, Ho Gi Son, Choe Sok Man and several others were in the cell opposite. The Japanese had moved all other "criminals" elsewhere when the KNA case had started, but they were still short of cells, so after the preliminary examination, prisoners were herded together in overcrowded cells, ex-

cept for Kim Hyong Jik, Pak Yun Hwan, Mr. O and one or two others. The cells looked like a row of cages, separated from the corridor by iron bars, so you could see those in the cell opposite as if they were in the same room.

In the cell opposite Kim Hyong Jik's, Cho Pil U lay under a threadbare blanket. He was badly wounded, after days of severe torture. His cheek bones stood out starkly, his face was badly scarred and his eyes hollowed. A youth in a student uniform sat beside him and Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man leaning against the wall.

Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man were talking in whispers, and Choe Sok Man was just saying:

"I used to be afraid of gaol, to think that I would just give in and die and I was terrified at first. But I've discovered I can lead the bastards by the nose."

"You can lead them by the nose all right, but you're too glib, that's the trouble." Ho Gi Son smiled at Choe Sok Man uneasily.

"Not at all. Thanks to Mr. Kim, Choe the Glib's tongue has found the door, door-frame and padlock and all. Mr. Kim taught me how to face the inquisition. I get my words ready at the back of my lips and send them out only through the manhole door in the front gate, so there can be no mistake. Well, when I mimicked the drug vendor playing his violin, my interrogator was amused and almost grinned, but then he was afraid that I might cheat him, so he goggled like a sunstruck ox, cried out 'God damn you!', stamped his feet and slapped me in the face. So I raised hell too, shouting, 'Why do you hit me? I'm telling you all you asked: I told you exactly what the drug vendor did.' The policeman seemed dumbfounded and could not hit me any more and shrank back, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha. What a man! You've got guts, I will say."

"Why not? There is nothing that will scare me now. I'm only worried about Mr. Kim. We should all be trying to get him safely out of here, but we have been a trouble to him even in the jail..."

Choe Sok Man lowered his voice, looking across into the cell where Kim Hyong Jik was.

"You're right. When we were in Naedong, we should have...."

The voices of the two men became softer and were hardly

audible.

Kim Hyong Jik was seated as before, except that he was staring at the tiny barred window high up in the wall.

In the last month Kim Hyong Jik had been fighting hard in jail. Not just enduring torture and continual interrogations—that was the easier part. But what was much harder was protecting the organization and comrades outside and getting the hundred colleagues behind bars released.

His most urgent problem was to find out how matters stood now. Considering who was here and who was not, he was inclined to believe that the enemy had not yet got to the roots of the KNA's organizational structure, that the arrests were chancy, based on a single clue from Hwanghae Province, a picking of people supposedly connected with the actions of last summer, on National Humiliation Day. There were not so many KNA members among the one hundred and more arrests, and of these only a few were known as such. The rest were tied up with guilds or friendship associations and schools where the KNA had been active, out of whom the enemy would be able to squeeze very little however hard they tried.

On the other hand, in the course of the interrogation, Kim Hyong Jik had found out quite a bit about their evil intentions and their weak spots. The enemy knew that the KNA existed and that Kim Hyong Jik and just a few others such as Cho Pil U, Pak Yun Hwan and Mr. O were members, but beyond that they knew little—they didn't know how big it was or how widespread, membership or the nature of its work. So all round the country they were chasing their own tails trying to find more about the KNA, its activities, and particularly its links with active struggle waged in many parts of the country in the past.

With a clear view of the situation Kim Hyong Jik was now confidently directing the fight within the prison.

He had asked his comrades to answer the interrogations with outright denial. He had instructed them to deny affiliation with the KNA or any connection with the actions on National Humiliation Day. On the other hand he stressed that the only way to save our precious organization, the comrades outside and themselves was to stick firmly to denials and to prevent the ring of arrests from spreading, to keep the enemy completely in the dark.

His instructions had been passed from cell to cell. The

comrades had been united as one man and stood up to savage torture with courage and confidence. The result was that for a whole month since Kim Hyong Jik's arrest the case had not moved forward, which had infuriated the enemy.

In addition Kim Hyong Jik more clearly realized that the monstrous and continual tortures of the preceding week were the Japs' frenzied reaction to failure. So he looked forward to a victory in this confrontation, and pushed ahead with the fight in prison with a confidence, cheering all his comrades.

A message from Pang In Su he had received the evening before had also helped, for the message said that as instructed by Kim Hyong Jik, Hong Jun Gol and Pyon Ok Rim of Songchon, Yun Sam of Kyongsang Province, Maeng Gyong Jae of Seoul, and many other comrades who were specially likely to be arrested were all safe, had gone underground, carrying on their activities—there had been no further arrests—and that the armed units were continuing to expand their theatre of operation in the border areas along the Amnok-gang River, giving the enemy a lot of trouble.

At Naedong, it was reported, the remaining members of the school guild, village community guild, stone-monument guild and the pupils, united around Kang Ban Sok, kept the school going and had helped the families of those arrested to bring in their harvest. That was a glad news, indeed.

The information raised Kim Hyong Jik's spirits. In spite of the Japs' frenzied enquiries helped by their lackeys, by the renegades, the comrades and the organizations were fighting back more stubbornly with the whole twenty million following only the KNA. We'll have a showdown if you want to, Kim Hyong Jik almost shouted inwardly.

Controlling his emotions he listened to the rustling of the branches of the tree outside his barred window and the whine of the electric lines, and he was sunk in an abyss of meditation.

His thoughts flew up into the gloomily overcast sky. He was already mapping out his plan in detail. After a few years, at the most, behind the bars, he would again launch into the arena of struggle, and he was already outlining his action plan.

It would be hard to direct the revolution from Naedong or any similar places deep in homeland now, he thought. I should choose a new place and set a new orientation and methods of our activity. Where? At home the greatest circum-

spection is no longer any use. So should I leave the homeland? That's no good either. I need a strategy, a base, and a new method to link up the revolutionary and political enlightenment movements at home with the military activities across the border so I can give coordinated leadership. For this, the centre of activities should be moved north, near the border, as I had planned, meanwhile our revolutionary forces need reorganizing. So, many comrades should be sent to west Chientao and to the border area where we should establish our main base. This problem will be solved by sending the comrades who are underground now there, whose freedom is in any case restricted. Kim Hyong Jik pictured the face of each such comrade who would be sent out.

Each thought begot a better, each idea another. He sank still deeper in his thoughts.

He did not hear the shuffle of boots approaching his cell door. There was a rattling of locks behind him and a voice called, "Mr. Kim!" Only then did he turn round slowly to see the thought control chief and a warder.

"Come along, please," said the former. Even the Japs could not talk rudely to him. At first some of the police had treated him like a criminal and he had given them a good dressing-down. He had roared at them that he did not recognize a law that allowed the thieves who stole the land to treat the people they had stolen from as criminals for trying to regain what was theirs and that if they treated him like that again he would never go out for their interrogation. After that he had remained motionless like a great mountain never answering any question or responding their summons. So they had gone into his cell to drag him out by force, but every time they tried, the whole cell block would be in uproar. After that the enemies had called him Mr. and been reasonably polite. Needless to say, his dignified stand had given his comrades great strength and pride.

"What do you want?"

"His Excellency the Superintendent-General of the Police would like to see you, sir."

"The Superintendent-General of the Police? Good. I'll come and meet him."

Kim Hyong Jik rose to his feet with an imposing air. He thought it might be not bad thing to take a look at the

Superintendent-General's face; it was probably as gloomy as the autumn weather outside his barred window. Cho Pil U, who had been lying on the floor in the opposite cell, woke up and glared at the thought control chief standing in the passage with feverish eyes, and then, jerking himself up, whispered "Mr. Kim!" Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man came up to the iron bars, wide-eyed.

Kim Hyong Jik walked slowly, watching the cells on either side. Walking along the passage to the interrogation room and back gave him a brief glimpse of his comrades' faces, which was always some compensation. He cast looks of unbounded encouragement and affection to each cell. Even coming back after torture he always tried to walk upright along this corridor and to smile to his comrades.

And at this moment too, Pak Yun Hwan, Cho Pil U, Mr. O, Ho Gi Son, Choe Sok Man, Chong Jin Gu as well as middle school students from Pyongyang, stevedores from Kyongsang and Cholla Provinces—dozens of detainees—greeted Kim Hyong Jik with expressions of hope and delight.

The Superintendent-General's door opened and Kim Hyong Jik entered upright and dignified.

Watanabe faced him grimly. Kim Hyong Jik approached Watanabe in a dignified gait, his head held high.

Watanabe looked perplexed as he stared at Kim Hyong Jik. He doubted his eyes, rising hesitantly. What sort of man can he be? Watanabe thought to himself. I wonder if he realized that this will be the showdown. He stared blankly at the approaching Kim Hyong Jik and in spite of himself, took a step forward.

"Did you want to see me?" Kim Hyong Jik was the first to speak. His eyes held a look of disdain.

"I did." Watanabe replied hastily.

"What for?" asked Kim Hyong Jik, sitting down leisurely on a chair behind him. Watanabe was confused. He felt as if their positions had been reversed. Only then he collected his thoughts and put on a grim face. Kim Hyong Jik's attitude somewhat discomposed him; he tried hard to recover his composure. Now he straightened himself and, rattling his sabre, went slowly over to his desk and sat down on his heavy upholstered armchair.

"Well, have you any statement to make yet?"

Watanabe feigned sternness but could not quite eradicate his look of expectation. Watanabe's confusion made Kim Hyong Jik smile.

"Ha, ha, ha. You look exactly like an old country man looking hungrily at a story-teller at a drawing room. Unfortunately, I'm too young to have any stories that will gratify your curiosity."

"What? An old country man?"

Watanabe repeated stupidly. Suddenly he glared and smashed his palm down on his desk top.

"You shut your mouth. Are you mocking me?!"

"Listen. Why do you scream like that? Do you think that will frighten me? I wasn't joking, that was exactly what you looked like."

"How dare you. Don't you know who it is you are facing or on what business? You should show some respect in your position."

"My position? My position is just. But meeting you I feel as if I'm talking to a robber whom I caught red-handed."

"What's that?!" Watanabe almost burst with rage. He struck the desk again, rose from the seat, his right hand reaching for his sabre. At that moment the door jerked open and the police chief ran in. Watanabe was taken aback. Seeing his subordinate standing and staring at him, he shut his eyes and fought to control himself. He had suffered a similar counterattack from Kim Hyong Jik during the first interrogation and he had lost his self-control; he had lost face. I can draw my sword any time, thought Watanabe. It was an inch or up in the sheath and he pushed it back.

"Go out, chief."

"Yes, sir."

The chief of the police clicked his heels and went. Watanabe stalked up and down the room, his hands folded behind his back. Kim Hyong Jik stared tauntingly at his would-be inquisitor. Watanabe returned to his chair and sat down.

"Now listen to me carefully. We are meeting today for the last time. This is the showdown. For the last time, do you hear?"

"Don't you think you're a bit in haste? Stop threatening and go ahead and say your piece."

"Threatening? You are mistaken right there. You are too naive."

"Naive? Ha, ha...well, we Koreans have pure hearts."

"Shut up. Don't go believing that because we've given you a lot of time that's a sign of weakness. It is not. We have been lenient with you, but our lenience has a limit. We are just sorry for you wilful people, in particular for you."

"You mean you pity us? Ha, ha, ha. That's a new one."

"Look here. You know full well how powerful the Greater Empire of Japan is, for undoubtedly you have intelligence out of the common. So who is powerful enough in the world today to dare to challenge our Empire? Answer that question. If you Koreans are supposed to be so good with your hard heads. There's a saying, remember, about trying to break a rock with the head. At present we are trying to be patient handling this case with kid gloves; not only this case, our policy in governing the whole peninsula has been mild. But do not mistake that for weakness, that it is not. We came over to this peninsula to bring tranquility and prosperity to you Koreans."

"Ha, ha... that's a new idea."

"Now, stop joking, Mr. Kim. Once we decide to get tough, you and your whole KNA will mean nothing. We have enough power to turn this peninsula into a wasteland overnight."

"Now that sounds more sincere, more like your true intention. Well, try and see what happens."

"Mr. Kim, I advise you to be a little more cautious in your attitude. You have insulted us and have tried to harm us, yet still we value your courage, intelligence and magnanimity."

"Well, how much are you asking me to pay, then, for your high opinion?"

Watanabe did not know if Kim Hyong Jik was being serious or sarcastic. He stared at him before he spoke.

"I'm not asking you for anything at all, except the facts. For that we'll guarantee you whatever you want."

"What facts would you like to know?"

Kim Hyong Jik smiled and Watanabe again was at a loss which way to take it.

"Well, first tell me how the KNA was formed, about its central leadership and local groups, its officers and membership."

"Ha, ha—that's what I expected. What's your second question?"

"Give me a truthful account of KNA involvement last summer for the protest rally at Pyongyang, the boycott of the ODC in Hwanghae Province, the riot at Songchon, the stevedores' strike at the port of Pusan, the handbill case at Seoul, and other disturbances around the country."

"Anything else?"

"That's all. I'm not asking a lot from you."

Watanabe shot a tense look at Kim Hyong Jik and swallowed jerking his protruding Adam's apple. Kim Hyong Jik smiled, well satisfied. Watanabe had played into his hands. For now Kim Hyong Jik knew for certain that they had not found out a thing.

"Listen, I'm afraid you are trembling in fear of this KNA which might or might not exist. Unfortunately, I know nothing at all except the number of the KNA membership."

"Tell me."

Watanabe urged, half rising to his feet.

"But I'd like to ask you one thing first. How many people took part in the anti-Japanese struggle this year?"

Watanabe stared abstractedly at Kim Hyong Jik and said.

"Why do you ask? Must be thousands."

"I think they are all members of the KNA."

"All members of the KNA? Give me some proper details."

Kim Hyong Jik did not answer. His eyes were cold with disdain and hatred.

"Superintendent-General of the Police, don't you think you are foolish? Yes, it is you who are naive or foolish; and you are ridiculously out-of-date. You call yourself a great authority who governs Koreans, so why are you so ignorant? Never with this foul bargaining will you find out a mortal thing except that you are absurd, an ignorant blockhead."

Watanabe growled. His heavily lined face flushed dark red. Kim Hyong Jik looked at the Jap disgusted. The sweat was streaming down Watanabe's forehead. He grunted, twisted his fleshy neck and gasped, unbuttoning his tunic at the neck with his hairy hand. Then he jumped up, howling with fury.

Immediately the local police chief was at the door, drawn by his superior's frenzied howls.

"Take him away and torture him."

Kim Hyong Jik walked out as calmly as he had entered. As the door shut behind him, Watanabe, who had been standing blankly like a lost soul, sank limply into his chair.

2

"Mr. Kim, Mr. Kim..."

A choked voice called repeatedly, and finally Kim Hyong Jik came to. First the dim reddish light bulb hanging on the high ceiling came into view; then, his eyesight cleared and he could hear several faint voices.

"Can you hear me, sir?"

This was Cho Pil U. Kim Hyong Jik raised his head and looked across into the cell opposite. Anxious faces stared at him through the iron bars. Cho Pil U pressed his face right up against the bars, gripping them in both hands and beside him several worried faces. Ho Gi Son and Choe Sok Man among them looked out.

To let my comrades see me in such shape, Kim Hyong Jik was thinking. He gathered all his strength in an endeavour to sit up; a sharp pain seared his whole body and he barely managed to swallow a groan as he raised himself to lean against the wall.

"Those bastards tortured him nearly to death. How are we going to avenge him?" Cho Pil U stared into the passage, clenching his fists.

Kim Hyong Jik opened his eyes and gazed the barred window. It was pitch dark outside, and the wind blew bleakly. Instinctively he knew that the night had far advanced. Now he remembered the terrible tortures but he fancied that he had still managed to come back down that corridor on his own feet without support, and that as he had entered his cell he had seen a shaft of light from the setting sun coming through his barred window, and that he had felt dizzy....

Turning his head he looked across the passage to the anxious watching faces, gave a shaky smile and asked nobody in particular:

"It's quite late now, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. The clock in the passage struck one a while ago," said Choe Sok Man quickly.

"One o'clock, eh? But, why don't you go to bed? Lie down and sleep. You'll need all your strength to fight another battle tomorrow. Let us lie down now and sleep."

"How do you feel, sir?" asked Cho Pil U, his voice shaking slightly.

"We in here as well as those in other cells are worried about you and are sitting awake," said Ho Gi Son who sat beside Cho Pil U craning his neck.

"You mean the comrades in the other cells are also up? They shouldn't, I am honestly quite all right."

Kim Hyong Jik was saying when they heard footsteps coming down the corridor. Everybody looked in that direction, feeling the strain. But it was only warder Pak—they were all relieved.

Warder Pak was strongly under the influence of Kim Hyong Jik. He had brought him comforts, had been kind enough to do errands and look after him. He was Kim Hyong Jik's line of communications with prisoners in other cells and with Pang In Su outside.

Warder Pak looked round carefully and then whispered into the cell.

"Mr. Kim, how do you feel? The people in all the other cells are asking me if you've come to."

Kim Hyong Jik sat up.

"Thank you, warder Pak. Tell my comrades to go to sleep and not to worry—I'm all right."

"You've come to! Are you really all right?"

Warder Pak looked both pleased and worried.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle, as you see. Go back quick and tell them not to lose any more sleep—"

"Yes, sir!"

Warder Pak was relieved and withdrew. His footsteps were heard making a round of the whole prison, and were followed by a hum of voices in the cells. Though they were locked up in different cells, Kim Hyong Jik could feel the wave of warm affection touching him, and his heart was full. He felt it was all worthwhile, to keep on fighting even here behind these bars to his back at the enemy.

"Well, then, let's all sleep. I will too."

Kim Hyong Jik said this, looking fondly at the comrades in the cell opposite.

"Yes, sir."

Only then the people lay back in their places. All lay crouched on the cold wooden floor; so did Kim Hyong Jik.

After a while he sat up again to prepare a circular instruction for all the cells and a message to Hong Jun Gol through Pang In Su. They should go out tonight while warder Pak was on duty.

While he was deciding what to write, he heard somebody calling softly from the cell across the corridor. He looked round and saw Cho Pil U still clinging to the bars, his eyes glittered with anger. Kim Hyong Jik looked tenderly at Cho, and then came up to the bars and said softly.

"Why don't you sleep, Mr. Cho? You are sick, you know. You should lie down and rest."

Cho Pil U turned away his face but remained sitting without a word. His face showed the anger and emotion that overflowed in his heart.

"Mr. Kim!" said Cho Pil U under breath and turned his face towards Kim Hyong Jik. His feverish eyes looked blank.

"What's the matter? Why are you excited again? You are not well, you know..." Of late, apparently because of his illness, Cho Pil U was easily excited even over trifles. Kim Hyong Jik knew it well, so he had asked him very gently.

"This is vexing. Very vexing, sir!" Cho Pil U cried out, unable to control himself. Kim Hyong Jik just listened to his words.

"Because we didn't work properly, we have reduced the KNA to this and you are the one that is suffering—I never thought we would come to an end like this..."

Cho Pil U was terribly upset, there were tears in his voice. Suddenly Kim Hyong Jik became serious.

"Do you really think our struggle has come to an end, Mr. Cho?"

His voice was stern.

"It has not exactly come to an end but...well, we are locked up here..." Cho Pil U faltered, though his face betrayed utter despair.

Kim Hyong Jik was silent for a while. Now he realized why Cho Pil U had been so nervy lately, got angry so easily

over quite little things. Despair is the enemy of revolutionaries, a dangerous enemy.

"You are wrong."

Kim Hyong Jik's voice was gentle, yet there was something very powerful about it.

"Am I?" Cho Pil U sounded apologetic but unconvinced.

"Yes, you are. Our battle is not ending—it is only starting in real earnest now."

Cho Pil U gazed vacantly at his leader. Kim Hyong Jik was worried that close though he was to Cho Pil U, with this corridor between them, he could not take his hands and talk to him as he would like.

"It is true that our KNA is facing a grim test at present. But it is one of many trials on the course of our struggle, it does not spell destruction. Mr. Cho, do you not see that if we are to liberate our country we will face many trials far grimmer than this?"

"You are right, sir, but with you in prison..."

"Mr. Cho, this test is all the same for each one of us. The thing is that each one of us must face it bravely, conscious that it does not signal our downfall. It is a thorny bush on our road, no more. And in fact, the KNA has not been destroyed; it exists and it is carrying on. Just think of this: The KNA's doctrine and aims and its fighting spirit have spread far and wide at home and abroad, have taken root in the hearts of many people, and our organizations and our comrades and the masses of people who follow us are alive and fighting on."

"Mr. Kim, I know that..."

"So you know it?" With a smile, Kim Hyong Jik went on.

"Of course you know, and without my explanation. And I understand your troubled mind, why you are unable to repress your anger. But, Mr. Cho, remember that to revolutionaries, giving way and losing heart is far more dangerous than an enemy bayonet levelled at your chest, for that is the one thing that could lead to our destruction. If we dedicate our lives to the revolutionary movement, we must be ready to face worse trials than this. For those who take this road might face worse hardships than death.

"But no revolutionary is entitled to live and die the way he chooses. When the revolution makes its demands, he must be ready to give up his life; however dear it is to him, and if

it demands that he should live in such adversity that death would be a boon, he must go on living and be true to the revolution. This is revolutionary's duty."

His persuasion was so warm-hearted and earnest. Cho Pil U who had listened with his head bowed low, slowly looked up.

"Mr. Kim!" called Cho Pil U, and looking across to Kim Hyong Jik who faced him through the bars, said, "Please forgive me, I was wrong."

"It's all right, Mr. Cho, if you have understood. But, Mr. Cho, first you must recover your health. For you need strength to have a firm will. I've asked warder Pak for medicine for you, so please take it when he brings it. And now let's have a rest."

"Yes, sir."

Cho Pil U managed to answer. Several prisoners in the opposite cell who were still awake, had been listening to Kim Hyong Jik, felt a great surge of warmth towards him.

As soon as they were all asleep, Kim Hyong Jik took out a pencil stub and a scrap of paper hidden in the edge of the blanket and began to write. In his message to Pang In Su he told him to see Hong Jun Gol immediately and ask him to collect up the comrades in hiding all over South Pyongan Province and to take them to west Chientao to carry on their work there; both he and Pyon Ok Rim must go and they should also take Duk Bu from Naedong. Kim Hyong Jik also wrote that when he got to west Chientao Hong Jun Gol should seek out Kang Jin Sok and give him a detailed account of the situation here, and ask him to come back into the homeland to take care of KNA affairs. He ended with a message to his wife in Naedong. Before he knew it day was breaking and his barred window was turning grey.

3

One day late autumn Kim Hyong Rok, Kim Hyong Jik's younger brother, and Kang Yong Sok, Kang Ban Sok's younger brother, visited Naedong from Mangyongdae. Kang Ban Sok was delighted beyond measure. The two men had come to take her

and her sons home because she must be lonely and having a difficult time living in a strange place.

"...Mother asked me to fetch you home, come what may. She said that in times of trouble you need your kith and kin around you." Her brother-in-law said earnestly.

"Sister, let us go home before the river freezes over. You cannot endure this hardship all alone."

Her brother, too, spoke eagerly, but Kang Ban Sok remained seated broodingly and replied.

"I thank you. How I wish that I could go! But when you farm even if there is little rainfall part of the year, you still have something to reap in with your sickle in the autumn. You cannot expect only good times in your life. There will be droughts and misfortunes too. But we must stand up to them, mustn't we?"

"You are right, sister. But how can we live in peace if we leave you and your children in this strange place.... We can't go back leaving you behind. Surely in these troubles it is better if we live together, relying on each other."

Kang Ban Sok held her brother's hands in hers and said.

"I'll come back, but not now. No one arrested in this village has been released. They, too, are fighting for our country; my husband is their leader, and I am his wife. If I were to leave here because my husband is absent, how would the villagers feel—you cannot tell what will become of them in prison and I must know how the case will turn out before I go. If you only seek your own comfort, you fail in your duty as a man or woman. I must stay here and carry on my husband's work to educate the villagers and to protect the village, sharing the bitters and the sweets with them. Isn't that how I should act as revolutionary's wife? Go home, don't worry about me. I will come home when the time comes. We won't need a boat to move what little we have in this house. I can put all our things in a bundle and carry it on my head."

Kim Hyong Rok and Kang Yong Sok bowed to Kang Ban Sok's noble resolve.

After seeing her brothers off, Kang Ban Sok worked more assiduously with a firmer determination. She dressed her sons more neatly and ran house still more meticulously. The school had been closed down by the Japs and the children prohibited from coming, but she cleaned the school every day and kept the school equipment, wall charts and other teaching materials

neat and tidy. At night the village women gathered at Kang Ban Sok's. She told them stories about famous patriotic generals and patriotic women, taught them Korean, and to live proudly as wives and mothers of the most righteous patriots.

Winter came. And on the day of the first snow Pang In Su sent a man from Pyongyang with a news of her husband in prison. She was glad to hear that her husband and all the villagers were fighting well, and that in many ways the Japs were getting the worst of it. There was a message too that the prisoners from Naedong though they would yet have to face some hardships, yet, might well be released before long; and a special message to her was to look after the children, to keep the evening classes going and to look after the villagers. Kang Ban Sok's eyes filled with tears as she thought of seeing her husband, with all his battles and troubles in the prison. And she was grateful that since his arrest she had been working for the village, had done all she could, just as he would have wished.

Pang In Su also asked her to send Duk Bu to accompany Hong Jun Gol who was going to take a group of comrades to west Chientao, as Kim Hyong Jik had requested. Kang Ban Sok thought she had better prepare Duk Bu for going.

Lastly Pang In Su said that Kim Hyong Jik had been arrested because Pak Byong Tae had informed against him and that she should be careful.

"So it's because of him!" she said to herself. Her eyes sparkled. The landlord always changed his route if he saw her even at a distance. One day she had met him unexpectedly on the road. Thoroughly confused, he had feigned sympathy, expressing his regret at Kim Hyong Jik's arrest and his sympathy over the hardship his family must be having; then he had hurried off like a hunted animal. So that's it, she said to herself, gritting her teeth. Her whole body burned with rage at Pak Byong Tae, a rage that could not be quenched were she to kill him ten times over. But there was only one way to avenge her husband. Bearing the flames of this rage in her heart, she put everything she had in her into the tasks he had assigned her.

Hong Jun Gol came at midnight, two days after she received the message. He came into the room prostrating himself before her, the palms of his hands on the floor.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, madam. The enemy has deprived us of Mr. Kim! This is our fault. We...."

His burst of indignation had given way to bitter self-reproach.

"What's the matter? It's not your fault. Please...."

Kang Ban Sok could not go on, she was so touched by Hong Jun Gol's warm affection for her husband.

"Yes, we burdened him with too many worries... we should have seen to it that he went hiding first.... I wish I could save him with my life... oh, I should have been with him!"

Conscience-stricken, Hong Jun Gol spoke incoherently between sobs. It took her quite a while to calm him down. She looked at him and said.

"Oh, don't. You too have heavy responsibilities; calm down and let us discuss what we must do now."

"Oh, yes, madam!" exclaimed Hong Jun Gol. He quickly mopped up his tears with his sleeve and raised his head. "I came here today to avenge him!" Hong Jun Gol's eyes emitted blue fire of rage.

"Avenge him?"

"They say Pak Byong Tae was the informer. I'm going there right now to shoot him." Hong Jun Gol took his glistening pistol out of his belt and jumped up.

"Don't talk nonsense!" she said sternly and Hong Jun Gol stopped to look back.

"Don't get excited. I too would like to kill him ten times over. But you mustn't do it."

"Why? Why not?"

"Do you think that you can do any good to my husband by killing the scoundrel or to the independence movement?"

Hong Jun Gol had no answer. He seemed less excited but his eyes were still burning with fury.

"You mean we should leave that devil alive?"

"We'll get rid of him some day. When the independence movement achieves its goal, he will meet his end together with the Japs."

"You are right, but... oh, that swine...." Hong Jun Gol muttered, sitting down limply. There was silence. Then Kang Ban Sok, looking at him gently, said.

"As my husband said, you must go to Chientao immediately with the young men. It is an important job. I think you should take many young people and build up our army—that is the

way to help my husband. If you kill Pak Byong Tae now, it would endanger you, who have an important duty; that would hardly help my husband."

"I understand."

Hong Jun Gol answered sighing resignedly.

"Could you wait a while? I must send for Duk Bu." Kang Ban Sok went out to call Yong Chun and asked him to fetch Duk Bu, but to do it quietly, unnoticed.

"Well, how is Miss Pyon Ok Rim getting on?" Kang Ban Sok changed the subject when she returned to dispel his gloom.

"Oh, I nearly forgot. When I was leaving, Miss Ok Rim gave me these books for Jung Son; she said how much he must be missing his father...."

Hong Jun Gol unwrapped his small bundle and took out several books. He put them down beside Jung Son who was asleep beside his little brother in the warmest corner of the room, and patted his head.

"They are picture books and children's magazines, she said."

"It's very kind of her! Miss Ok Rim is really kindhearted and firm. You are going with her this time, I expect?"

"Yes," Hong Jun Gol replied, blushing. Kang Ban Sok smiled.

"When you get to Chientao, I hope you two will support each other and fight well. Ok Rim, a single woman, will be working in an alien land, so I think you should look after her."

"Yes."

Hong Jun Gol answered, his face still redder for he knew the true meaning of what she had said.

While they were talking, Duk Bu called to Kang Ban Sok. She had told him her husband's wish that he should go to Chientao and take up arms to fight for Korea's independence, and for the last two days he had been waiting; he had been too excited to sleep. He came into the room, carrying only an old unlined jacket and trousers, and several pairs of bast sandals.

"Why so many sandals?"

Kang Ban Sok, with a smile, helped him to put down his string of sandals.

"They say it's a long way...."

Duk Bu faltered, blushing. But his eyes shone with hope.

"Have you met this gentleman before, Duk Bu?"

"Yes, I have met him several times."

Hong Jun Gol took the young man's hand and pulled him down to sit beside him.

"You must leave with this brother right away."

"Yes. Are you going to fight too, brother?"

"Ha, ha. You looked a dull sort of boy, but you are quite smart. Well, do you think you can handle a gun and fight?"

"Yes, I will!"

"Let's fight together, then. So, shall we go now?"

"Yes. I told the uncles in the servants' quarters that I would go to a friend's house because my room was cold. I can start right now."

Kang Ban Sok was looking fondly at Duk Bu talking with Hong Jun Gol. He had only a worn-out unlined cotton jacket and trousers on. That was his reward for ten years' service to the landlord. Her heart contracted as she thought that had his parents been alive they would never have seen him in such straits—his mother would even have sold her hair to have something for him to put on for his long journey.

Kang Ban Sok got up without a word and went to the clothes chest. She opened the lid and took out a bundle of clothes. They were the cotton-padded clothes that Kim Hyong Jik had worn on his last journey to Chientao, and they had been washed and mended. She handed Duk Bu the new jacket and trousers, and an outer coat and fur cap that had hung on the rack.

"Here you are. Go to the other room and change your clothes."

"What's that, madam?"

Duk Bu edged back, round-eyed.

"They look like Mr. Kim's. You keep them. I'll take him and have him dressed...."

Hong Jun Gol tried to disuade her, staring at her with emotion in his eyes.

"That's all right. My husband has got others. Come on, go and change your clothes, for you have to go."

Kang Ban Sok put the clothes in Duk Bu's arms.

"Mother!" cried Duk Bu, holding the clothes against his chest, big tears streamed down his face from his big eyes.

"Oh my, a big man like you who are going to do such a big job—go on and get changed. If your parents were alive, they

wouldn't let you go off as you are."

Duk Bu shed tears, still clasping the clothes.

Kang Ban Sok followed Hong Jun Gol and Duk Bu to the top of the back hill to see them off.

"Mother, I promise you that I will fight well. I will avenge Mr. Kim and repay your kindness." Duk Bu said in a husky voice and made a deep bow.

"Good, I wish you good health. Study hard and fight well."

Kang Ban Sok remained there for a long time, holding down her skirt that fluttered in the cold wind. It was on this hilltop that Kim Hyong Jik used to meet and see off countless comrades.

4

Ever since he had had news of Kim Hyong Jik's arrest, Hong Jun Gol had been eaten with rage. His heart had been aflame with wrath and his conscience smote him. He felt himself to blame for Kim Hyong Jik's arrest. It was Kim Hyong Jik who had saved his life and thanks to his guidance he was able to live like a man. When he had been in danger of death Kim Hyong Jik had risked his life to help him. And I failed to protect him, let him be arrested, Hong Jun Gol thought. Moreover, I'm just looking on, arms folded while he is suffering in prison!

He reproached himself continually, day and night. And on his return from his journey throughout South Pyongan Province to pass on and carry out Kim Hyong Jik's instruction from the prison, Pang In Su had come and conveyed Kim Hyong Jik's order to go to Chientao, and at the same time told him that Pak Byong Tae was the informer.

Hong Jun Gol had hurried to Naedong intending to shoot the informer and then make straight for Chientao. But after meeting Kang Ban Sok, Hong Jun Gol felt almost relaxed for the first time in a month. When he had met Kang Ban Sok he felt as if he was meeting Kim Hyong Jik. Because of his lack of judgment and excitability Hong Jun Gol often rushed off to Naedong to meet Kim Hyong Jik, who was always so broad-

minded and reasonable and who loved him like a brother. Then he would cool down and find the right solution to the problem. And this time he had had the same experience.

No one could be more grieved and angered than Kang Ban Sok over Kim Hyong Jik's arrest. She had greater reason than anyone to want to rescue Kim Hyong Jik or to kill Pak Byong Tae. However, she firmly endured, looked after her family and the village and steadily dealt with the tasks left by her husband. She did not give way to impulse or excitement; she fought staunchly, with a consciousness that the true way for a revolutionary's wife to do was to help her husband, to support him in his endeavours to help him achieve his desires, to bolster his great will and in the revolutionary movement. He felt her deep calm, her tenderness, warmth and courage in her neat and tidy house, in her earnest advice that killing Pak Byong Tae alone would not help Kim Hyong Jik, and in the way she helped Duk Bu to prepare for the journey as if he was her own son. The more he thought of Kang Ban Sok's noble spirit to serve Kim Hyong Jik and the revolution, the more he respected her.

Now, Hong Jun Gol realized the importance of his task which he had regarded as almost trivial. Accompanied by Duk Bu, he hurried up to reach Chang-gol by early morning.

That night at an appointed place he met a dozen or so young people. He told them how to get to a certain log cabin on Hwangcho-ryong Pass, going via Sinchang, Kachang, Pukchang, Maengsan, Nyongwon, and Onchon. It was best that they should go there in small groups to avoid the enemy's eye.

They divided up into twos and left. They were earnestly asked to avoid all habitations. Duk Bu went with one of the others. When all of them had gone, Hong Jun Gol, too, left with Pyon Ok Rim. Pyon Ok Rim was in a man's suit that she had prepared. With a big coat that came down to her knees, a fur cap, footcloths and a pair of bast sandals, she looked like a rosy-cheeked handsome boy. She trekked along rugged mountain paths, her eyes shining brightly. She could not keep down her excitement and emotion at leaving for a distant land where she would devote her whole life to the revolutionary movement, to do the will of Kim Hyong Jik. And she was still more excited because she was accompanying Hong Jun Gol.

"Maybe it's hard for you to walk, eh?" Hong Jun Gol asked, stopping to look back at her.

"Not at all."

"Let's walk a little slower. I'm so used to walking alone, so...."

"Never mind. Do walk quickly, please. I can keep up. We mustn't lag behind others, must we?"

"Don't worry. We are going to take a short cut, so we needn't hurry. If you get footsore, it would cause much greater trouble." Hong Jun Gol said, grinning.

"Oh, don't worry. Do you think I can't make it? Of course I can. I used to go to and from the township on foot and even to and from Naedong and Pyongyang." Ok Rim looked crossly.

"But you can't compare trekking along steep mountain roads with walking to and from Pyongyang."

Hong Jun Gol retorted, gripped by a desire to tease her.

"Don't worry about me, anyhow, and go on walking. You think I can't walk by myself?"

"Ha, ha... all right, let's get a move on. Let's go quickly and build up our strength and smash the Japs. Then we will avenge Mr. Kim and relieve my own anger," said Hong Jun Gol.

"Yes, indeed. To think of him in prison...."

She faltered as she turned her head to look at the dark night sky.

"Miss Ok Rim, I am quite resolved now. So far I've only added to his worries, but this time I'll carry out splendidly the task that he assigned me from his prison cell. I'll join one of the Independence Army units and build it up into a really excellent force. I'll propagate Mr. Kim Hyong Jik's great ideas among the soldiers, form a well-armed modern unit to greet him with on his release. I will build up a force that will promptly carry his every order."

"You are right. Please do that." Ok Rim said with feeling.

"Miss Ok Rim, you too must do what he asked; you'll build a really good school and train sturdy reserves for the independence movement."

"I'll do it with all my heart."

"Let us do it. Miss Ok Rim, let us two together fulfil the tasks he set us, come what may."

Hong Jun Gol was so moved that he quite unconsciously took Ok Rim's hands.

"Yes, let's."

Ok Rim's moist eyes shone tenderly, and for a while, the

two walked on in silence.

They arrived at the log cabin on Hwangcho-ryong Pass in a week. At the appointed hour Duk Bu and all the youths but two were there, and the last two came in at dusk. Not knowing that misfortune was following in their wake, the whole party set out northward.

They had covered some ten *ri,* when they heard gun shots behind them.

"Hands up the lot of you!"

This shout came as bullets hissed past their ears. This unexpected development confused the young people.

"Flat on your face! Quick!"

Hong Jun Gol shouted, taking cover behind a big tree, his pistol at the ready. A dozen or so policemen chased the party, firing their rifles. What brought them here? Hong Jun Gol wondered.

They found out later that the last two youths had disobeyed Hong Jun Gol's instructions, had stopped off in a village yesterday to spend the night. And they had never dreamed they were being tailed. But this was no time to dig into the reason.

Hong Jun Gol looked round to find Pyon Ok Rim and Duk Bu close behind him. Behind them were other youths who were staring at Hong Jun Gol, betraying their bewilderment. Hong Jun Gol was calm. With a smile he said.

"I'm going to decoy them out and mow them down, so you keep going on your way. You'll reach a forest of Mt. Oga-san presently—I'll meet you there."

"Oh, no, you mustn't go. How can you cope with them alone?" Ok Rim clutched Hong's sleeve.

"Brother, let all of us go together and fight it out!" Duk Bu too came forward, his eyes bright.

"Let's!"

Grimly, the others agreed.

"Are you mad? Do as I tell you and don't worry about me. You lead them, Ok Rim."

Saying this Hong Jun Gol shook Ok Rim's hand and ran into a bristle-tooth oak thicket to the left, firing at the raiders.

One Jap policeman screamed and fell and all the others rushed towards Hong Jun Gol, firing their guns. Hong Jun Gol led the enemy for some distance away and then hid behind a big rock on a rise. The Japs had pursued him closely and he

could not make good his escape. He would have to shoot it out. Hong Jun Gol calmly took aim, shifting to pick off one Jap after another. He got several before the enemy took cover too and began to return his fire from behind rocks and trees. They kept shouting to Hong Jun Gol to come out with his hands up. The firing continued, the position remained static. Dusk was drawing in over the forest, and Hong Jun Gol realized that if the thing dragged out it must end fatally for him.

Hong Jun Gol loaded his last cartridges. After that he only had a bomb. If it would only get darker, he could still get out alive, but night comes down too slowly on the plateau. Well there was nothing for it. He had to get a head start on the enemy. He began to wriggle out, advancing clandestinely through the thicket. Soon there were shouts and confusion followed by rifle shots. But Hong Jun Gol was on his feet in a fast zigzagging run.

After a while Hong Jun Gol came to a sudden halt. A high cliff barred his way, the base shrouded in darkness, the sound of firing was approaching. He looked to right and left but there was no way out. He looked behind him, and saw seven or eight men in hot pursuit. Will this battle be my last then? He asked himself, hardly able to believe it. No, I don't believe it, he asserted. I won't die here. Never! And if I do I'll take the bastards with me. Shaking his head he hid behind a jagged rock on the cliff and waited. They surrounded Hong Jun Gol in a semicircle at a distance and slowly closed in crawling forward, using every bit of cover they could find.

There was a sharp report, and one Jap who was sneaking out from behind a larch tree, shrieked and fell forward. For some moments none of the attackers dared to move. Then one policeman hidden in a hazel bush raised his head a fraction. Hong took aim and pulled the trigger. There was a click. Disconcerted, he jerked open the breech—it was empty. Obviously the enemy had heard it, for they started moving forward. Hong Jun Gol pressed his lips close.

Is this it? Are those dirty bastards going to get me? He wondered, for they were steadily closing in on him and shouting to him to give himself up.

"Come on out with your hands up."

Hong Jun Gol's eyes shot fire. He slipped the bomb out of the container at his side. He had carried it with him for years across the length and breadth of Korea and it seemed

almost like an old friend. Staring at it he pulled out his case and lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Suddenly Hong Jun Gol felt utterly calm. Each time he puffed a red light lit his high cheek bones and two eyes glared at the police. He had nothing to fear now. Death was inevitable. He was not afraid of death, he was only sorry that now he would not live to see Kim Hyong Jik's ideas victorious. But he was proud that he would not die in vain for Pyon Ok Rim, Duk Bu and the others would now get safely over the pass to fight for Kim Hyong Jik's ideas.

"Come on you swine. Just a bit nearer, come on just a few more steps." Hong Jun Gol was thinking. He puffed hard at his cigarette until the tip glowed brightly. Then he took it out of his mouth and touched it to the wick on the bomb. It caught and the spark travelled up it as the enemy came within a dozen paces their bayonets levelled at Hong Jun Gol.

"Come out and surrender!" One of the ugly Japs shouted, wielding a pistol in the air.

"I'm coming out," shouted Hong Jun Gol and stood erect, the bomb raised above his head with both hands. There was a single pistol shot and Hong Jun Gol felt as if something heavy had fallen against his chest. He staggered but with an effort he kept his foothold and shouted.

"Take this then, you island barbarians!" He used his last strength to throw the bomb before he fell. A loud explosion shook the cliff. Hong Jun Gol was conscious of a pillar of flame and loud scream. Then everything went black.

As soon as Pyon Ok Rim had got up to the top of the next ridge with other young people, she had stopped worried and watched the other ridge whence gun shots could be heard. The sounds of fighting became fiercer and moved to the right down towards a cliff. Suddenly the shooting stopped and there was dead silence. What could that silence mean? Pyon Ok Rim was burning with anxiety. She had a vision of Hong Jun Gol smiling so confidently, saying he would soon catch up with them.

I must believe him; surely he will come back safe! Pyon Ok Rim tried to silence her own fears. He is probably on his way to us by now having wiped out all the enemy. Or maybe he got down into the ravine. She waited anxiously hoping that

his massive body might appear out of the thick wood before her at any moment. But at that moment she heard a shot closely followed by a loud explosion.

As Ok Rim started running down the hill, a pillar of fire rose up on the cliff top. "Brother!"

Duk Bu, also running, cried out with wide-open eyes and the other youths came down behind him. Again silence and they stopped, worried eyes looking into the darkness at the top of the cliff.

I should have stayed with him, I should have been with him, alive or dead—Ok Rim was thinking. She pulled herself together.

"Please go on over the pass and wait there!" she said to the youths surrounding her. Then she ran down the slope.

"I'll come with you, miss!"

Duk Bu came up behind her. All the rest wanted to come too, but Ok Rim ran down only taking Duk Bu and one other young man along. There was not a soul in sight near the top of the cliff. Running helter-skelter they reached the place where they had seen the explosion. Suddenly Ok Rim recoiled and stood motionless—the ground was littered with bodies. They were in black police uniforms. So the enemy were all dead, Ok Rim said to herself. But what has happened to him then? Her heart was beating frantically as she went nearer to the cliff.

"Brother...."

Duk Bu, who was in front suddenly went down on his knees, and Ok Rim's heart sank.

Ok Rim was petrified for it was Hong Jun Gol who was on Duk Bu's laps. The front of his big jacket soaked in blood. His tough face was pale and haggard and his eyes were shut. Everything turned black before Ok Rim's eyes and she felt as if the ground was sinking at her feet.

"He has a pulse, miss!" Duk Bu muttered. Ok Rim collected herself, squatted down as if sinking to the ground to hold Hong Jun Gol's wrist. His wrist was warm, his pulse was beating. Only then did she realize that she must dress the wound. She unwrapped the bundle she had been carrying on her back like a man. She put her white cotton jacket on Hong's bleeding chest and dressed the wound with a strip torn from her skirt.

She took Hong Jun Gol from Duk Bu and held him in her arms.

"Oh, Mr. Hong! Please, please wake up."

Ok Rim called to him eagerly, but he did not reply, his big eyes remaining closed.

There is no time to lose, she urged herself. I must go find a house. His wound must have proper attention. Where is the nearest village? The last one they had passed was more than 70 *ri* from here. Suddenly she remembered that Hong Jun Gol had told her just before that a few miles ahead through no man's land was the hospitable village where Hong Jun Gol stayed with Kim Hyong Jik on their way to Chientao. Yes, we must go there! she decided. Ok Rim looked up at Duk Bu and the other youth.

"You two must carry Mr. Hong."

Without a word Duk Bu who had been standing there, his eyes filled with tears, bent over and picked up the wounded man and helped by the other youth, eased him onto his back.

The party hurried to Hagaru, taking turns to carry Hong Jun Gol. It was the first time they were passing through this part of the country and the mountain road was so treacherous that they could not move quickly.

Ah, why did I let him go alone! Ok Rim was blaming herself, not stopping to think that even if she had been with him she would not have been much help. Still, she felt she was to blame that Hong was hurt.

As the Big Bear began to go down and the half moon rose over the eastern hilltops, Hong Jun Gol came to and called to Ok Rim.

"I'm here. This is me. Are you awake now?" She cried out, her voice trembling. Hong Jun Gol's first words were:

"Everybody all right?"

"Yes," Ok Rim and all of them answered, crowding around him. Hong Jun Gol looked round at Ok Rim and all of them in the dim moonlight, smiled and heaved a big sigh of relief.

"All right then, hurry up and go. You'd better leave me here. Hurry up and...."

Hong Jun Gol passed out again.

"Mr. Hong!"

Ok Rim called tearfully and even shook him, but he did not come to.

"What are you doing? Let's go. I'm sure the village isn't far."

It was nearly dawn when they reached an isolated village.

The villagers were thunderstruck when they recognized Hong Jun Gol whom they had seen with Kim Hyong Jik a year earlier. The people in the house where Kim Hyong Jik had stayed were shaken, did not know what to do for the best. They laid Hong Jun Gol down on the warm floor boards of the room, and the master went off immediately to fetch an old doctor who lived 20 *ri* away. The doctor dressed Hong's wound, though roughly. But Hong Jun Gol and his party could not stay at the village for long, because they had heard that the Japanese police were searching the area. The villagers took the party to the Bear's Cave in the mountain, taking Hong Jun Gol with them, and the group stayed there for five days under the villagers' devoted care looking after the wounded man.

The villagers lamented over the news of Kim Hyong Jik and ground their teeth with anger. They said that ever since his visit here, they had remembered his words whenever they had got together and they reaffirmed their resolve to help the independence movement.

They took great care of Hong Jun Gol, taking turns to guard the Bear's Cave day and night, and sending men to far-off places to obtain medicine. The mistress of the house where Kim Hyong Jik had once stayed, prepared three hot meals a day with other women of the village. When they found out that Hong Jun Gol had no appetite at all, they even brought him potato-starch noodles, saying that when he was here last year he had liked the noodles so much.

Pyon Ok Rim, Hong Jun Gol and the rest of the party were grateful to the villagers for their kindness; and they were struck by the fact that though Kim Hyong Jik had stayed just a day, he was a man of such a great calibre that he had instilled burning patriotism and humanity in all the villagers in Hagaru.

On the sixth day the party left with Hong Jun Gol on a stretcher. Hong Jun Gol had recovered consciousness, but his wound was serious and it would take a skilled doctor to save him, so that despite the devoted care of the villagers they must move him. It was Ok Rim who decided they must go. The villagers carried the stretcher for a whole day when they saw them off.

After parting with the villagers the party moved north as fast as possible, not speaking to save the breath. Ok Rim

walked by the stretcher, looking north at a gloomy overcast sky.

5

As soon as the new year came around, the first open trial was held on the "Korean National Association Case" in court No. 2 at Pyongyang District Court.

The wide gallery of the gloomy and dark court room was packed to capacity and there was a stir among the audience. Near the front were Kim Hyong Rok and other members of Kim Hyong Jik's family from Mangyongdae and Chilgol, as well as Chong Jin Gu, Ho Gi Son, Choe Sok Man and others from Tongsam-ri, Maekjon ferry and Todok-ri. Some time ago, when the case was transferred from the police to the prosecutor's department, most of the persons all but Kim Hyong Jik and 20 others had been released.

The awe-inspiring judges' bench on a high platform almost like an altar were vacant. So were the clerks' seats and the dock in front of the platform. Outside the court students and citizens who had not been allowed in were jostling and shouting trying to get into the gallery. Uniformed police were trying desperately to hold back the crowd.

Presently the door left to the front of the court room opened. A policeman in a chinstrap armed with a rifle came in and glared towards the exit. After a few moments a slender man in a remand prisoner's uniform made a dignified entry.

"That's Mr. Kim Hyong Jik!"

"Mr. Kim!"

There was a stir through the gallery. Kim Hyong Jik walked a few steps, then stopped and looked round the room. Though he looked emaciated, he had the same bright light in his eyes. The whole crowd in the gallery rose to their feet as a token of respect and reverence.

Smiling Kim Hyong Jik bowed slightly to show his gratitude.

"Silence," howled the policeman at the exit, but the people ignored him.

Kim Hyong Jik walked on slowly. He was followed by Pak

Yun Hwan, Cho Pil U, Mr. O and several others. All kept their composure. The people in the gallery sat down again one by one once Kim Hyong Jik and his colleagues had taken their seats. After a while a middle-aged fellow in *turumagi* appeared through the same exit.

"Traitor!"

"Japs' dog!"

The gallery became noisy again. It was Pastor Paek, the turncoat. His shoulders hunched and his head bent, he stumbled to his seat on the witness bench. Soon the prosecutor, like a crow and all the clerks in black came and took their seats; the prosecutor's seat was to the left of the clerks' seats and the bench. The greasy prosecutor raised his head and looked around the court.

"Si-lence!" shouted the Jap guard standing by the exit. As a door on the right side of the courtroom opened and the bench, the three black-garbed judges and two lay assessors, walked in silently like evil spirits. The president was from the Seoul High Court. They took their elevated seats, with a dignified air, straight as ramrods, as if to browbeat everybody from the outset.

The presiding judge, sitting in the middle, a frail-looking skinny little man rang his bell and declared the court in session. Then a bespectacled clerk got to his feet and explained the status of the court and judges, confirmed the presence and identity of witnesses and defendants. He then began to read out the prosecutor's protocol of preliminary examinations. His high pitched metallic voice grated on all ears.

"...Thus, Kim Hyong Jik and other defendants met at x x x ri in the city of Pyongyang towards the end of March in the 6th year of the era of Taisho (1917) and formed the Korean National Association, whose members are as follows:

"First defendant Kim Hyong Jik

"Domicile: Nam-ri, Kopyong Sub-county, Taedong County, South Pyongan Province.

"Address: Tongsam-ri, Koup Sub-county, Kangdong County, South Pyongan Province.

"Occupation: Teacher at Myongsin community school

"Second defendant Pak Yun Hwan

"Domicile: township of Pongsan, Pongsan County, Hwanghae Province.

"Address: Unryul Sub-county, Unryul County, Hwanghae

Province...."

The lanky clerk read out fluently the protocol that named all the 20 and more people as organizers or members of the KNA. The allegation was so ludicrous that Kim Hyong Jik and his comrades listened to the charges with scornful smiles. He also kept referring to the doctrine of the KNA, and its activities, to the propagation of patriotism against Japan and the doctrine of the KNA to the pupils of Myongsin School at Naedong and the community school at Unryul, and to the fact that last summer there had been demonstrations, protest rallies, strikes and various other anti-Japanese actions in many parts of Korea—Pyongan and Hwanghae Provinces, Seoul, Kyonggi, Kyongsang and Cholla Provinces. Lastly, the defendants were charged with having led a seditious secret society and caused disturbances, aiming to overthrow the state. After reading out the document, the clerk looked haughtily around the room and then sat down.

Then the skinny presiding judge declared the hearing open and turning to the dock, said:

"It is stated that during the preliminary examinations the defendants have admitted all that you are charged with. Do you reaffirm this and plead guilty?"

At that point somebody burst out laughing. The whole bench looked started, as in the dock the stocky Pak Yun Hwan sprang to his feet.

"Where on earth did you get hold of that fraudulent document? You claim that I was involved in the plot to overthrow the state, for which you haven't an atom of evidence and you say I admitted it?"

Pak Yun Hwan laughed boisterously.

"How dare you show such impudence within the sacred precincts of the court?"

The presiding judge rebuked him, his eyes goggling.

"I can't help laughing, with you reading out such fiction in this 'sacred precincts'. I declare I never admitted to such charges, it's sheer rubbish," said Pak Yun Hwan proudly.

"Don't admit them? The defendant should think back to when he made the statement. We have full proof. Did you not preach opposition to Japan to students and to peasants?"

The fat prosecutor had risen and was speaking sternly.

"Of course I did. But how could it be a crime? I am a

teacher and as such I teach a love for truth and justice and I have never taught my students untruths."

The prosecutor jerked up again, but Mr. O spoke first, his clear voice ringing through the courtroom.

"I too reject all the charges!"

Mr. O forcefully denied having made such admissions, declared the charges false and unjust and said that the attempts to connect him with the KNA and to involve him and Kim Hyong Jik with the protest rally were a frame-up. He was followed up by all the 20 and more defendants, including a stevedore from Pusan, a peasant from Cholla Province and a young member of the student association at Sungsil School, Pyongyang; each of them denied having admitted to any of the charges and pointed out that the protocol was a bag of lies.

The court began to stir. The bench were at a loss what to do.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at his dependable comrades. Convinced that the Japs lacked proof, that their whole KNA case was little more guess-work, he had told his comrades to make categorical denials in court and to attack their accusers.

The bony presiding judge stood up and rang his bell.

"Silence—silence—"

Soon the room became quieter. The prosecutor rose, in his flappy black gown he looked like the shadow of death. "The defendants are denying incriminating facts that are as clear as day. I think I should advise them that their wrongful denial will only make their position worse. Let me just outline what you call the doctrine of the KNA, which you have all supported and put into practice.

"First, this doctrine calls the Greater Empire of Japan an aggressor, a sworn enemy. Second, it appeals to Koreans to overthrow Japanese rule by their own efforts, by making use of Japanese rivalry with the Western powers in the Orient. That is direct challenge to the Japanese Government-General in Korea and to the Greater Empire of Japan, a treasonable scheme to overthrow our state. Support for this doctrine is treason and conspiracy to subvert the state. Would any of the defendants dare deny the seriousness of this? Answer!"

The fat prosecutor spoke with great vigour. The judges who had first been ill at ease, now looked relieved and glanced down at the dock. The room was quiet.

"Let me say a few words."

Kim Hyong Jik's calm, resonant voice broke the silence. And as he rose every eye in the courtroom was focussed upon him.

"Just answer our questions," the presiding judge leaned forward. Kim Hyong Jik turned to the bench and spoke slowly.

"First, since we have such a line-up of Japanese legal authority here, including officers from Tokyo even, might I first ask one question? This: Does Japanese law punish the victim, or have you laws against murder, robbery and incendiarism? Answer!"

The bench sat wide-eyed, visibly shaken, as Kim Hyong Jik looked at them sharply, each in turn.

"How dare you ask subversive questions? Where do you think you are?" The prosecutor howled, white with anger.

"Subversive questions? No. Your trial is subversive. Answer if you can!"

Kim Hyong Jik was pressing them hard.

"The defendant has no right to ask questions in court. He will answer the prosecutor's questions."

The presiding judge had collected himself.

"Presiding Judge, don't be ridiculous. As I have pointed out, it is not I who should be the defendant here for it is not I who am the criminal. Who the criminals are will come to light and evidently to the public gathered here today once the true facts come to light. Now, Presiding Judge, answer if you can. Which is the criminal, the robber or the robbed? Surely a babe in arms can answer that, yet all you great authorities sit there dumb and changing colours like a bunch of cocks. Come on, let me have your answer."

Kim Hyong Jik put his rhetorical question and went on.

"No. You won't answer, for you can't. Because it is you who are robbers, the biggest robbers of all time."

As Kim Hyong Jik made this declaration, the skinny presiding judge burst out his anger and growled.

"What are you talking about, defendant?"

But Kim Hyong Jik just ignored him and went on to say.

"Don't interrupt me, and hear me out! You indict us for the 'crime' without proof, but I'm going to denounce you for clear facts proved by history.

"The record of your crimes began some 40 years ago when,

you broke into another's country with your guns and sneaked in. Your armed vessel *Unyo-go* fully loaded with guns and soldiers intruded into our territorial waters off Kanghwa-do Island...."

Saying this Kim Hyong Jik started his scathing address on the recent aggression in Korea by Japanese imperialism. His speech was calm, dispassionate even as he developed his flawless argument. The judges were so taken aback that they did not interrupt but sat there open-mouthed and stupidly. For more than half an hour he laid bare Japanese crimes—their aggression, their malicious frauds and swindles and the monstrous atrocities they had perpetrated in Korea. There was utter silence in the courtroom as he spoke.

"Human history has seen many aggressors, many who usurped other countries, but none so vicious or malevolent as you. Let me just mention one of the atrocities you have committed since you robbed us of our country. Not long ago you arrested 120 innocent patriots and like savages, you tortured them to death. You bent their bodies, broke their limbs and squeezed them into small boxes which you rolled around; then you put them in pillories and hung them up from the ceiling and whipped them; you bound the thumbs of captives with wire, hung them aloft and scorched their bodies with a red-hot iron rod; bound their hands and feet with wire, pierced bodies with gimlets, knives and needles, hacked off their flesh, then put victims still alive into oblong coffins, stood them upside down. You forced captives to walk barefoot over a board of nails. You have committed deeds that savage animals would shudder at. And that is just one aspect of your crimes.

"Look round, look at our land, all three thousand *ri*. There is no ravine, no hilltop, riverbank, or field, no single handful of soil that is not stained with the blood of innocent Koreans murdered by your bayonets and littered with their bones. Such are your crimes, your crimes against our nation, and against humanity. But though you squeeze us into boxes, shackle, hang us upside down and burn our bodies with your red-hot iron rods, you'll find that truth cannot be shackled, bent, or hung or burned.

"You do not deny my charges? So which of us is then the criminal? We, the raped, the plundered, we who are defending our land? Or you, Japan, the invader and the plunderer? Answer before the sacred law of all humanity."

Having logically exposed and condemned the aggressive nature of Japanese imperialists and their crimes, Kim Hyong Jik stood still, looked calmly at the judges on their altar; his eyes held hatred and contempt. For some minutes the judges sat there, white and dazed, when through the heavy silence a middle school student's voice rang out from the gallery:

"You are the murderers, the robbers!"

The whole gallery took up to the shout.

"Murderers!"

"Robbers!"

"Get the hell out of our country!"

"Stop this phony trial!"

Only then did the crows on the altar stir, the skinniest, the presiding judge, rang his bell again and again, but the roars from the gallery drowned it out, until white with fear, the whole bench retired.

The trial was not resumed that day. Three days later, unannounced, in camera, the trial was resumed. They had intended to get it over with quietly, without the knowledge of the public—just a few hasty addresses, findings and then sentences. But the news leaked out and people flocked to the court and created an uproar, with clamorous demands for admission. Inside the courtroom Kim Hyong Jik and the other defendants refused to recognize the illegal trial and refused to plead. This left the Japs to make their bits of speeches to each other before they passed their pre-determined sentences. Kim Hyong Jik was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, all the others to shorter terms.

However, Kim Hyong Jik and all the other defendants categorically rejected the court decision. The news soon spread to Pyongyang and all round the country, and there were many bitter complaints and protests. The Japanese had stoked the fire so clumsily that it spread.

And the Superintendent-General of the Police Watanabe ground his teeth. He had held his investigations for over two months, had worked until his round potbelly sagged, yet he had failed to get another bit of information about the KNA. He was convinced that Kim Hyong Jik was its central figure and that this formidable secret association had spread its roots all over the peninsula, damaging the very foundation of the Government-General; but he could not lay his hands on it. The

KNA was superbly organized, he could not follow the pattern of the network, and even under torture the prisoners had not talked. He had hoped to extract a confession out of Kim Hyong Jik, but neither skillful questioning nor torture had made the slightest impact. All that he had found out was the strength of the personality he was up against.

Watanabe was sore. And he had had the trial held in an endeavour to deal with the case severely according to the rigged up records, but the whole trial had been a fiasco. He wished he could terminate everybody involved in the KNA case in complete secrecy, but it was impossible because the public had been making such a fuss about the case.

So Watanabe had called a top-level meeting a few days earlier—the judiciary, the civil and military police. It had gone on all day and finally arrived at the conclusion that they would have to get the trial over without too much ado. Firstly because it would be better at the present to hand down light sentences, to treat the case as insignificant rather than reveal the Government-General's impotence to the public by a long succession of adjournments in the trial. In this way it would be easier to "root out" the KNA. For if the case was given little importance, the KNA branches would start up again. A flawless network of investigation and a stringent surveillance of their manoeuvres would enable them to dig it out root and branch. This was one of the reasons for the policy for the swift settlement of the KNA case.

The second reason was the general situation at home and abroad. There had been public outcry over the KNA case and against the police authorities. In the towns and villages, schools and organizations where the people had been arrested, movements had been launched to fight for the KNA prisoners' release. There had been deputations to county police stations, and public collections to aid their families. As times went by those involved in the KNA case had been winning more and more sympathy and support in all strata of population. And the October Revolution in Russia, a sixth of the land surface of the world, had made that spectre, Communism, which had haunted the world for nearly a century, into a very real threat, for it was an eye-opener for the exploited and oppressed countries and peoples. The echoes of the October Revolution resounded in Korea already angry over the KNA case. Since in this situation, there was no knowing what might happen. It

would be as well to keep things in a low key and wait for an opportunity to mop up the whole KNA.

So, the Japs had reopened the case and toned the whole thing down to look like a very trifling incident.

Meanwhile Kim Hyong Jik had seen through the enemy's scheme and mapped out a policy for Kang Jin Sok to carry on his activities outside, while intensifying KNA discipline for underground activity and to prevent the organizations from being exposed. On the other hand, taking advantage of the enemy's increasingly defensive attitude at the trial, he instructed all the cells to go into a more vigorous offensive.

One day Kim Hyong Jik was visited by his brother Kim Hyong Rok, who told him that his whole family had decided to employ a lawyer for the second trial even if they had to sell up everything they possessed. Hearing this Kim Hyong Jik laughed and said.

"I don't need a lawyer. They only speak with a mouth, and so do I. Why waste money on a lawyer?"

In the second trial the arguments were fiercer and this time Kim Hyong Jik was sentenced arbitrarily to one and a half years' imprisonment. Again he cornered them and he refused to recognize the court decision. The enemy found no way of saving face.

6

Pale moonlight shone through the barred window. Kim Hyong Jik was lost in a deep thought, leaning against the wall, a newspaper on his lap staring up at it. The paper gave prominence to news about the successful Great Socialist October Revolution in Russia, where despotic institutions had been overthrown and a worker-peasant government put in power, Lenin had been elected first Chairman of the Soviet of Workers and Peasants and this Soviet had proclaimed peace and new agrarian law.

Having triumphantly completed his courtroom battle and gone over their past struggles, Kim Hyong Jik was seeking

experience and lessons from them and conceiving a far-reaching ideas to take Korea's revolutionary struggle to new heights. And now, though belatedly, he had heard the news of Russia's October Revolution. Grasping the rough outline it seemed to Kim Hyong Jik that this revolution fitted in with his own far-reaching idea. Through the success of the Great October Revolution he could reaffirm that his revolutionary policy had been correct. First of all, in that he aimed not only to overthrow the old institutions or to drive out the aggressors and win independence, but to build a new free country that would guarantee happiness to the working masses, the exploited and oppressed. You could only say that true independence had been achieved when you were rid of the aggressors and the privileged classes, those who oppress and exploit the working masses and had built a country where the poor, the masses who do the work though they have neither money nor yet land, can live well. That was the very goal that Kim Hyong Jik was aiming at. He had chosen the revolutionary road to help the poverty-stricken people in his own Mangyongdae village, people like Kang Gi Dong, and Ho Gi Son, Chun Bo, Sok Man, Duk Bu in Naedong, the young A-frame carrier he had met in Seoul. Therefore, he was convinced that he was right in his belief that the revolutionary movement must succeed not by the efforts of a handful of independence crusaders or revolutionaries or by the use of the outside forces as Chong Am was advocating, but by the united effort of the working masses. The recent struggles had clearly proved him right.

He was also right about the decisive moment for revolution. With Europe and Russia sucked into the violent whirlwind of the world war, Lenin had lost no time in arousing the entire people and led the October Revolution to victory. And Kim Hyong Jik knew that the golden opportunity must arise for the Korean people out of the rivalry between Japan and the Western powers in the East. Lenin's Russian Revolution was near and dear to him.

Staring up at the pale moonlight shining in through the barred window, Kim Hyong Jik's heart beat with hope and ardour. His body was behind the bars, but his soul soared high into the sky. In his mind's eye he could see that dark blue sky over the far north, the rugged hills in Chunggangjin and the vigorous current of the Amnok-gang, which would be his new arena of activity when he got out.

What will be my central task in the new phase of struggle after my release? He asked to himself. It is to strengthen our organizations at home, expand and strengthen the armed units in Chientao and build up our internal forces faster and more energetically, to be ready for the decisive moment of the revolution. And the most important of all, to go among the masses and rally them to one great idea. Unless that is achieved, it will be impossible to expand and strengthen our political or military activity. I have consistently maintained that a revolution without the masses is like a tree without roots. This will be proved as unambiguously by the KNA's activity as by Lenin's. Without relying on the masses, without a mass foundation, it's impossible to wage a struggle such as these; for without this even though we might go all out in the fighting the KNA would be destroyed completely by the enemy. From boyhood on I have believed that a big boat can only float on deep waters and this conviction has been borne out by my own experience. We must go and work in real earnest among the masses. But how can we go really among them, like their own kith and kin?

After a lot of thought, Kim Hyong Jik decided to become a doctor. He had been interested in biology since his years at middle school, and he read many books on modern and traditional Korean medicine. And he felt that he could acquire a considerable amount of medical knowledge even behind bars if he studied hard. In that way he could make even this year profitable to the revolution.

He would be glad too, to have some worthwhile books to read during the nine months of imprisonment which was not that short. Books on political and social subjects were not allowed unless sufficiently reactionary. Medical books would make much better reading. The Japs might see it as a career decision, as a retirement into private life—which would also help him as camouflage in his future activities. And there is nothing like putting up a doctor's slate for close contact with people of all strata.

One morning Kim Hyong Jik asked to see the head prison warden. When the warden came to his cell, Kim Hyong Jik gave him a list of well-known medical books of all ages and countries such as *Tonguibogam* (the Thesaurus of Korean Medicine), *Uibangryuchui* (the Collection of Medical Treatment)

and the Medical Encyclopedia and asked him to have his family send in the books.

Now the fierce but dying winter and the infant spring were locked in battle.

On the sunny side of the hill the snow had already melted in Mangyongdae, and blades of new green grass were seen, though the snow had not yet melted in pine-forest on the hilltop. At noon it got quite warm and there were clear signs of spring, but an icy wind blew up at dusk. At night and dawn the earth was frozen so hard that you felt the winter still lingering.

This spring, in the year 1918, Jung Son was six. He longed for his father more than ever and he asked many questions about everything around him.

"Mama, is Papa coming in ten days? He is, isn't he?" He asked his mother one morning pointing at the wall. Kang Ban Sok looked at her son, hardly able to hold back her tears when she saw all the strokes her son had drawn on a piece of paper on the wall; it looked like the teeth of a comb. Every morning Jung Son took a pencil and added a line. He had started this since he had lived at Myongsin School in Kangdong. He often asked his mother when his father would return, and finally Kang Ban Sok had told him that his father would come back after a hundred days.

"Mama, Papa is coming back, isn't he?"

Whenever her son asked this, Kang Ban Sok would be at a loss and look silently at him with moist eyes.

"Didn't you say Papa would come back after a hundred days?..."

He had not forgotten what his mother had said three months ago.

"Yes. Spring has come to Mangyongdae and the Taedonggang has thawed, but your father hasn't come yet. But I'm sure he will come back."

Kang Ban Sok went down to the kitchen, unable to give her son a definite answer. Her heart contracted and she could not concentrate on her house work. There were 90 lines on the wall. How he longs for his father as he draws each line.

As she thought of this Kang Ban Sok's heart ached. She reproached herself because she could not help her son—she

could not get her husband out of prison. So she gave her son still more love, to make up for his father's absence and to instill in him his father's ideas.

Not long ago Kang Ban Sok had left Naedong and gone back to Mangyongdae with her two sons. Even after the Naedong people had all been released, thanks to her husband's stubborn struggle, she had decided not to leave Naedong until he too was out of prison. But her father and her brother-in-law had come over by boat to take her back, and she herself had thought it would be better for the revolutionary work for her to go back to Mangyongdae which was nearer to Pyongyang and she might be able to give some little help to her husband.

Ho Gi Son, Chong Jin Gu and the other villagers had earnestly advised that she go home, told her to leave everything to them; they would look after Naedong's affairs, reopen the school and work on, true to Kim Hyong Jik's idea. So here she was in Mangyongdae. Such were her thoughts as she cleared the kitchen table.

Meanwhile Jung Son feared that his father might not be back in ten days even, and his despair turned to a burning hatred for the Japs. Occasionally he would gaze out over on the Taedong-gang or stare absent-mindedly at the ceiling. He was very grown up in some ways.

"As Mama said, if the Japs were not in our country, Papa would not have been taken away, would he? How can I kick all of them out of here?" This thought was never far from his mind.

After breakfast Kang Ban Sok went out to do the early field work. Jung Son played with his friends, but he kept thinking of his father.

After supper Kang Ban Sok suggested to her son that he should go out on the swing. Her son was delighted and ran out to the swing. She had often taken him out and pushed him high. But this evening she had special reason.

"Push me just once, Mama. Then I can swing myself." Jung Son said, already on the swing.

"All right."

Kang Ban Sok pushed the swing and he swung, sitting and standing. He felt like flying through the sky.

"You are doing well, son. You can see everything beyond the mountains, beyond the clouds, I'm sure."

With a smile of satisfaction Kang Ban Sok watched the ropes of the swing moving back and forth.

"Let's swing together, Mama."

Jung Son pulled his mother's hand from the moving swing.

"All right. I'm very happy when I have a swing with you!"

Seating her son on her lap Kang Ban Sok got on the swing and pushed off with her toes. As they swung gently back and forth, a cool evening breeze played on their faces.

"Sing me a song, Mama!"

"I will."

She sang softly to the movement of the swing.

The land is wide
The sky is high.
Grow up, my son,
Still higher.

Kang Ban Sok often sang this song to foster curiosity and ambition in her son.

"You do sing well, Mama. Please sing me the song about the cinnamon you sang the other day." Jung Son said, looking up at the bright moon that was shedding its light through the pine needles. He must have recalled her song of the cinnamon tree and the rabbit that they said lived on the moon.

"All right, I'll sing it."

She started to sing the song, gazing at the round, full moon with her son.

As she watched the moon, Kang Ban Sok wondered why this bright moon shed its rays equally on all things on the earth, but the world of men was so full of differences and contradictions. The same moon must be shining through the iron bars right now, she thought. Maybe my husband is looking at it now? How has he stood up to the cold winter in prison? Is he well or ill?

Kang Ban Sok had known that as wife of a revolutionary she must be prepared for many hardships and ordeals, but when it was her husband who was suffering behind the bars, she fretted, for she could not help or comfort him, or share his sufferings. But, when spring passed to summer, and summer gave way to autumn, her husband would be free and carry on his revolutionary work. I must do my level best from outside to help him so that he comes out of prison safe. She deter-

mined that when he was released she would have to give him greater help in his revolutionary activity and to protect him better.

"Mama, I'll grow up quick, and have a Korean army and beat all the Japs who took Papa away! I must settle accounts with them."

As her son said this on the moving swing, still looking at the moon, Kang Ban Sok woke from her reverie. His big bright eyes shone with anxious desire.

"Oh, yes. I'm sure you will, son. You must settle accounts with the enemy for Papa, come what will."

Kang Ban Sok put her hand on her son's shoulder. Looking down at her son nodding, his expression so determined, she decided that she must take him with her when she would go and see her husband in the prison. She had visited her husband, but without her son, because she had not wanted him to see his father bruised and emaciated.

On her return home from swinging Kang Ban Sok put both her children to sleep side by side; then she began to make new clothes for the elder. He already behaved like a man, but she would like him to look more grown and dependable when his father saw him. She sat up all night, preparing the clothes for her son and herself. And they breakfasted early in the morning.

It was a very windy day. The dust rising over the Potongbol Plain blotted out the Pyongyang skylines. Kang Ban Sok walked steadily behind her son. He walked well, the skirts of his black cotton *turumagi* floating in the wind, the ends of his scarf thrown over his shoulders. He did not seem cold at all in the harsh wind of the still lingering winter.

Kang Ban Sok was happy to see her son, who still believed that they were on their way to have cotton willowed.

When they turned into the street of Pyongyang, the wind dropped a little. Kang Ban Sok visited a scrivener's by Potongmun Gate to have the form of application for a prison visit prepared on their way to the prison at Iwamachi.

Soon gloomy-looking Pyongyang prison with its high wall came into sight. Kang Ban Sok's heart began to beat wildly. The robbers are swaggering around, while the innocent are locked up in this hellish prison, behind these high walls—what a world this is.... For a long while Kang Ban Sok stared

at the wall and the iron prison gate, her eyes full of hatred. Then she quietly called to her son.

"Jung Son."

He looked up at his mother; his hand in his mother's he had been gazing at this queer house he had never seen before. Putting her arm round his shoulders, Kang Ban Sok asked.

"Do you want to see Papa?"

"Papa? Yes..."

Jung Son did not understand why she had asked this all of a sudden.

"We are going to see Papa now."

"Where?"

"Right in there."

"In that house?!"

He stared at the high wall and the grim prison building inside in wide-eyed surprise.

"Yes."

After a while he abruptly protested.

"Why is he in there?"

She could not answer right away, only staring into her son's eager eyes.

"The Japs who came to Naedong last autumn took Papa away from us and locked him up in there. They lock up many good Korean patriots in prisons like this and guard them with guns and bayonets."

"Then Papa can't come out of there freely?" He asked, glaring angrily at the prison.

"No, Papa will come out when the spring and summer are gone and the autumn comes."

"Are we going to go inside and meet Papa?"

"Look, son." The mother said, now in an earnest tone of voice.

"You must stand firm while we are in there. When we meet Papa, we will be watched by Japs with swords. You must not be frightened, must not be sorry or give a sigh before them. Let us meet Papa proudly. Papa is a patriot fighting to rid us of the Japs, and you are his son, aren't you? These Japs with swords are the worst robbers in the world. In front of them we must throw back our shoulders. Then Papa will be happy. You understand?"

She said these words not only to her son; she said them to herself.

"Yes!" Jung Son replied firmly, as if he understood what was on her mind.

Kim Hyong Jik walked leisurely down the dark, musty hallway leading to the visit room. The rattle of the chains on his ankles could be heard through the whole prison. He waited in front of a shutter that would be pulled up for meeting. The room was dimly lit by a small window high up in the left wall. The hairy warder sitting at a desk, looked coldly at Kim Hyong Jik, who waited calmly at the screened grill. It was so small that there was barely room to see a face on the other side. It was still closed off by a shutter. Kim Hyong Jik had been here several times when his wife, his brothers and acquaintances had stood on the other side of this grill. How many emotional meetings it must have witnessed with loved ones and friends? How many wives, parents, children had wept here when it slammed? How many patriots shed tears of blood looking at it? How many of them died on the gallows or in prison and how many heart-rending scenes would take place in front of the grill?

As he thought of this Kim Hyong Jik felt bitter hate burning inside his body.

The warder's gruff voice gave the signal, and with an unpleasant creaking, the shutter was pulled up, and the light shone through as Kim Hyong Jik's face appeared in the tiny grill.

"Papa!"

He first heard the familiar clear voice, a young ringing voice quite out of key with this gloomy prison. Only then did Kim Hyong Jik recognize two shadows standing outside the grill.

"Oh, Jung Son! You are here."

His voice was quiet, but he could not hide his delight.

"Papa!"

His son cried out again and jumped up to the grill. Then he stretched out his plump hand, to the grill, and stood on his toes. Kang Ban Sok too stepped forward.

Kim Hyong Jik wanted to touch his son's hand but the mesh was too close. He dropped the hand that he had lifted up to take the boy's in his, and clenched his fists. Something warm ran throughout his body. And his heart beat violently.

But he soon controlled himself, and smiled down at his son. Jung Son had grown up quite a lot, he looked so firm and dependable in his home-woven cotton *turumagi.*

"You are quite grown up! Well, do you play and learn well?"

Kim Hyong Jik compressed a thousand emotions into these few words.

"Yes, Papa! Chol Ju has grown up, too. He hardly ever cries now and he likes to play. And yesterday he walked three steps."

"Ha, ha... three steps, that's marvellous!"

Kim Hyong Jik's heart was full, not at this news about Chol Ju but at the way his son was obviously trying hard to think of things to comfort and delight his father.

Kim Hyong Jik looked at his wife. The way she dressed and carried herself, her noble, proud expression. Only her eyes betrayed her feelings.

"Our parents and the rest of the family getting on all right?"

"Yes. Grandmother and parents are all right. I intended to come by myself but Jung Son was so longing to see you...."

The wife faltered and closed her lips tightly. He could read how she felt and how firmly she was holding herself in control.

"That's good. You dressed him well...." He looked at her affectionately. He thanked from the bottom of his heart for her dignity and pride in front of the enemies.

"So it's not long since you left Naedong? How are they getting on there?"

"They are all right. They are still running the evening classes, and preparing to reopen Myongsin School in spring."

"I'm grateful to them. It was heartening to know that you stayed in Naedong and took care of the village."

Kim Hyong Jik said this casually, but it contained his true feeling.

"I didn't do much. I just worried with the villagers."

She blushed and looked down.

There was a short silence. Then suddenly animated, he asked in a different tone.

"Well, you have any news from the house at Chil-gol and west Chientao?"

He had Kang Jin Sok and Hong Jun Gol in mind.

"Yes. They are all well."

"I wonder if they are getting ahead with the ploughing? If any of them visit, do tell them they should plough deep and prepare the land well now that the soil has melted."

"I will."

Kang Ban Sok replied firmly as if she had instantly understood that he meant the revolutionary work. He smiled satisfied.

"When you go back, take good care of our parents for me. Since our country is lost, I've had no way even to do my filial duties to our parents. I'm sure you'll do them in my stead, though."

"Don't you worry."

"And I hope you are doing your best to teach our boy. Teach him Korean and mathematics systematically and that'll do."

"Yes, I certainly will. He has already learned quite a lot." She said, placing her hand on her son's shoulder. Looking up at his father Jung Son also said.

"I've finished the first year Korean reader, Papa."

"Oh, have you? That's the boy. Then, try and finish the second year reader by the time I come out of here."

"Yes. Papa, when I grow up I'll study hard and—"

Looking at his father with earnest eyes, Jung Son was just going to say something to his father when the shutters clattered down and a rough voice called out "Time's up!"

Everything went black before Kim Hyong Jik's eyes. He heard his son calling "Papa—" faintly from outside, and then a thudding on the wall.

Kim Hyong Jik was motionless staring at the grill. He could vividly see his son's clenched fists that had struck the wall and the thuds beat on his heart.

Soon there was a silence. And still the thuds echoed in his heart. Biting his lower lip Kim Hyong Jik said softly to himself.

"All right, Jung Son, that's all for today. Go home, and later you and I will crush the shutter everywhere together!"

Kim Hyong Jik turned around slowly.

On the other side Kang Ban Sok glared at the shutter with hate in her eyes. Then she took her son's hand. However, he

did not move, staring hard at the wall and listening to the fading rattle of iron chains. She too felt a pain, as if the sound was grinding her very bones, but she got up firmly and said.

"Come Jung Son, let's go."

But he would not turn round and kept watching the wall with the grill, in a pensive mood.

"Papa will come out before long."

Only when his mother pulled his sleeve again, did Jung Son turn reluctantly. His tear-stained eyes were blazing with fire.

As soon as Jung Son was outside the prison, he again turned round, looked at the high wall and said:

"Mama, when I grow up I'll break that prison with my own hands!"

"Yes, break it with your hands!"

Kang Ban Sok encouraged him and held his hand, which was as hot as fire.

EPILOGUE

THE GREEN PINE TREE

1

On a clear autumn day in 1918 Kim Hyong Jik was released from prison. His father and the eldest of his younger brothers were at the prison gate to meet him. They had brought a vehicle, but he would not ride; he went back to Mangyongdae on foot.

All his family and the whole village of Mangyongdae came out to meet him, in a festive mood.

That night his house was crowded with visitors. They listened to Kim Hyong Jik's story late into the night. They were enraged by the atrocities the Japs had committed in the prison.

Next day people from Naedong Village came over by boat from Kangdong. The villagers and the pupils whom Kim Hyong Jik loved—Chong Jin Gu, Ho Gi Son, So Chun Bo, Choe Sok Man, and Yong Chun, Gap Dol and Sun Hui—shed the tears of delight as they held Kim Hyong Jik's hands, and he too was delighted to see them. The villagers had had a good harvest having grown maize again as Kim Hyong Jik had taught them, and brought with them some maize given by each family of the village. He was still more delighted to hear that the members of the KNA had run the school guild, the village community guild and the stone monument guild as well as ever, and that they had reopened Myongsin School, with the help of a young teacher who had left middle school halfway.

Kim Hyong Jik was confined to bed for some time and Kang Ban Sok never left his bedside, looking after him day and night. She boiled medicine three times every day and prepared thin porridge with devoted care. Whenever she

bathed his terribly bruised body with salt water, she felt a knife in her heart and she trembled with a towering rage at the enemy.

The day after Kim Hyong Jik's release his brother Kim Hyong Rok had been out all day, and had come home towards dusk with an A-frame carrier on his shoulders. Bringing a bag into the kitchen, he told Kang Ban Sok.

"Sister, they say bean curd is good to cure prison fever. Prepare the bean curd from these beans and help him."

Kang Ban Sok was touched by her brother-in-law's devotion to her husband. Since his elder brother launched on the independence movement, he had been running this big family with never a word of complaint. Without a word and unremarked the whole of the family—parents, grandmother, brothers and sister-in-law—shared Kim Hyong Jik's pain as he lay suffering in bed, and all looked after him with warm and deep devotion each finding what they could to help cure his illness.

Thanks to their devoted help, Kim Hyong Jik was soon able to sit up in bed. And presently he got up and walked round the house leaning on his stick. The first time he went out of the house Mother Li Bo Ik saw that every step was an effort even leaning on his cane, and she cursed the Japs.

"Those gangsters! They arrested my innocent son and did this to him!"

Li Bo Ik still vividly remembered how healthy he had been when he was in middle school. One morning, after his exercises, a cold water rub-down and his early-morning stroll round Mangyongdae, Kim Hyong Jik found his brothers in the yard, and stretching out both his arms, he said.

"Come here, you two, and each hang on to one of my arms."

Hyong Rok and Hyong Gwon ran over to him and each hung on one arm. His outstretched arms were as firm as iron bars. Kim Hyong Jik even moved round the yard with a brother clinging to each arm. Mother feared her son would never regain that strength and her heart was filled with deeper hatred for the Japs.

Under his family's dedicated care Kim Hyong Jik got better day by day. His strong will power overcame his illness and tempered his body. Having once managed to sit up, he was never confined to bed again. He strolled through hills and fields, and if at home, twisted straw ropes, engaged in some

other manual work or read books. The happiest part of his daily routine was to walk through the hills and fields at Nam-ri and deep in contemplation.

At dawn he always went up Mangyong-bong Hill, and almost before he realized it, the ground was covered with snow. The distant grey overcast sky looked strangely bleak as if to warn of the severe frosts that might come at any moment now. But as his eyes looked up at the sky, they were ablaze with some strong aspiration and ardour. For some days now he had been determined to start out on a new road of struggle that he had worked out in detail while behind the bars. He had been waiting anxiously for his eldest brother-in-law. Not long before his release Kim Hyong Jik had sent out a message asking him to find out what the situation was in the KNA organizations in every area and then to come to Mangyongdae. He had found out after his release that his brother-in-law had left to come here with Pang In Su. When they came, he thought, he would analyze the whole situation and discuss a new policy he had worked out and take immediate actions.

One day, towards dusk when snow was falling in large flakes, Kim Hyong Jik quietly put down a book he had been reading and went out of the house. He stood on the earthen bank looking up at the sky from where snowflakes, beautiful as fresh cotton flowers, fell thickly. It was the third heavy snowfall this winter, it was an exceptionally snowy winter. He walked slowly across the yard, picking up his walking cane which had been leaning on the earthen bank.

The green pine forest on the southern hill, the Sunhwa-gang and Taedong-gang which were newly frozen over and the vast expanse of the Chunghwa plain, and the ranges of Mt. Taebo-san, Mt. Muhak-san and Mt. Ryongak-san were all under a white blanket of snow.

Kim Hyong Jik walked leisurely up a lane at the bottom of the southern hill. Without hat or *turumagi,* he walked along, looking at the crest of Mangyong-bong Hill, completely exposed to the falling snow. He wanted to expose his head and his face, his whole body, to this snow. While in prison, he had leant against the cold wall gazing up at the barred window, longing for everything outside. When the rain outside fell in torrents, he would long to be out in it, to get drenched to the skin. And when soft snow fell like today, he would wish he could walk in it, knee-deep. He had

longed for anything outside the iron bars. Liberty is precious to man. And when he thought about his homeland, locked up in a living hell by the Japs, his blood would boil.

Presently Kim Hyong Jik got to the clearing in the pine forest where he had met his brother-in-law two years before. He felt as if he might suddenly appear before his eyes and call out to him.

Where might he be now, Kim Hyong Jik wondered. Is he walking across some mountain or plain? He was dying to see him. And then the images of Pak Yun Hwan, Hong Jun Gol, Pyon Ok Rim, Kim Sok Ha, Maeng Gyong Jae, Yun Sam, Won Dong Yu, Chon Yong Tae, Cha Go Ryun and many other comrades rose before him. In his year of ordeal, they had carried on a hardfought struggle; the organization had not been broken, indeed it had struck deeper roots and it had grown. Kim Hyong Jik was profoundly grateful to those, his dearest comrades. He yearned to meet them, and as soon as possible, for heated discussions, to join the fight again, crossing and recrossing the lines of death with them.

Kim Hyong Jik walked slowly on. When he reached the cliff above the Taedong-gang he halted. A lone old pine tree stood before him. The gigantic old tree had grown up, striking its roots into a crevice of a rock on the top of the cliff. How many hundred years old, he wondered. The solitary tree on the cliff had grown very big and it spread out its green boughs high into the sky, though it was gnarled from winters and hard years. Now this solitary giant looking down on fields and rivers stood snow-laden, etched against the sky. The snow-covered boughs bent gaspingly. The snow fell with terrific force as if to break the pine and bury it at all costs.

All of a sudden there was a desolate snapping sound overhead. Kim Hyong Jik looked up at the top of the tree. It was shrouded in a cloud of snow, out of which a broken branch came crashing down and dropped heavily on the ground. Kim Hyong Jik felt a sinking feeling in his heart. He watched the pine tree uneasily. The tree shivered—whether because of the falling branch or because of the anger and renewed determination to fight back, you could not tell. The snow, which had weighed down the tree, floated and scattered like clouds. The tree was quiet again and the blizzard raced on. The boughs, which had been bent under the heavy pressure of the snow had thrown off the burden and risen as if in challenge to the

gloomy sky. There was emotion in Kim Hyong Jik's eyes; it flowed through him in warm waves. It seemed to him that that lone green pine tree standing at the top of the cliff symbolized the destiny of his comrades, and himself, of the Korean people. Would that pine tree stand up to the trials of winter to see another warm spring to grow again luxuriantly or would it crack in the biting frost, or under the weight of snow and crash over the cliff side to be buried at the bottom? The tree seemed to be saying that either it must win through in the teeth of the gale to new life or it must bend and break and die. These were the two grim alternatives. Kim Hyong Jik went to the tree and, stroking the cuirass-like trunk, stared up at the top swaying in its white hat.

"Well done, green pine! Stand firm. The winter will recede and spring will come again...." Kim Hyong Jik spoke to himself as if reciting. The snowflakes blew fiercely into his flushed face, on his whole body, but he stood still to watch the pine, his ankles now deep in snow. He found the spot from where the branch had been broken off a while ago. The place was red as if it was bleeding. He discovered the broken branch, lying at his feet, as thick as a man's arm. It looked unusually green and fresh against the snow, and its broken end, too, looked red as blood. He picked up the branch. Holding it in his hands, he gazed for a long time at the far sky dim with the blizzard.

2

Kang Ban Sok raised her eyes from her sewing and looked at the other end of the room. Kim Hyong Jik was sitting upright with an open book before him on his desk. He was not reading, however. He was deep in contemplation, staring at the wall. On the wall was a scroll on which were written the words—*Chiwon.* He had written them the year he had left Sungsil School halfway. The paper had yellowed a little but the dynamic strokes were as vibrant as ever.

Kang Ban Sok perceived that something great and powerful was surging up in his mind. He had become reticent and engrossed in reading; he meditated a lot and went out walking.

His meditative eyes would often show a hard glint. It was as if he was expecting something. Kang Ban Sok knew only too well what these signs meant. She had seen similar signs when he had had to leave the middle school despite his keen desire to go on studying, and then two years ago when he had left Mangyongdae for Kangdong, and also in the spring of the year before the KNA was formed. It was like the heavy silence before a storm. These days her husband was spending his time thinking, reading, walking and contemplating, and this augured some stormy, resolute action before long. She also felt that it would begin with his going away somewhere with his new fighting plans. She had perceived this with an indescribably warm feeling in her heart. So, to be prepared for an abrupt departure, she had been sewing clothes for him assiduously in the last few days.

What is he thinking of, she wondered. His eyes shone with an inner light and his lips moved faintly. Suddenly he looked round.

"Would you bring me the inkstone case from the bookshelf, wife?"

He seemed to be in a hurry. She put down the sewing, got to her feet quickly and took the inkstone case to his desk. He took a sheet of white paper from his drawer and spread it on the desk. She began to rub down the ink stick on the inkstone. He picked out a thin writing brush and dipped the tip of it in the ink. He pulled up his sleeve a little and held the brush over the paper. After a few seconds of thought he put the tip of the brush to paper. Soon some lines of words flowed vertically like the fierce streams of a river. They were written in black ink with such a pulsating stroke that Kang Ban Sok simply had to read them.

Tell me, Comrade, do you know
That tall green pine tree on the southern hill?
All winter long it suffered
Under frost and snow
Yet scarred, it will return to life
In the warm sunshine
Of the spring's awakening.

And if I cannot bring my country independence
Why live on?

Comrade, my body they may maim.
Yet scarred and bloody
I'll fight on
To the warm sunshine
Of my country's liberation.

With a tender smile Kim Hyong Jik watched his wife reading out the poem. He had written it with one go as soon as his inspiration had matured. Now, listening to his wife, the poem sounded fresh and new. He was sad that he could not get the deep emotion he had felt while looking at the old pine tree on the top of Mangyong-bong Hill down completely, but he felt that at least he had the rough outline into the poem. His wife reread it.

"How do you like it?"

Kang Ban Sok, who had been lost in thought for a moment after reading the poem, slowly looked up. While reading his poem, she had been sure that as she had expected, her husband had already mapped out plans to prepare another storm and had decided to carry them out.

"I like it. I think I felt the same when I looked at a green pine tree once."

"Thank you. A thought suddenly formed in my mind today while strolling on the southern hill, so I wrote the poem. Well, wife—"

Kim Hyong Jik interrupted and then looked at her a while. She must have suffered greatly while I was in prison, right to the day of my release. And what a great strain it must have been for her to cope with all the household affairs, he thought. Warming to her, he looked for a while at the faint crow's feet at the corners of her still young eyes and at the coarse skin and emaciated body.

Kang Ban Sok waited for her husband to speak. He hesitated for a while, for he felt it would be too cruel. But then he had to speak.

"I think I'll have to leave again."

"Soon?"

His wife was unexpectedly calm.

"Yes. Even tomorrow if a certain man comes."

"So soon? I knew that you'd be going, but are you strong enough yet? Why not wait till winter is over?..."

"I'm completely recovered. But how did you know that I'd

be going?" Kim Hyong Jik looked at his wife doubtfully. She was somewhat confused and dropped her glance.

"Well, I just guessed. You are not supposed to be at home...." Kang Ban Sok prevaricated.

"Ha, ha, ha. Not supposed to be at home.... You are right. We must be constantly on the move all our life. Do you know why?"

"Tell me, please."

Kang Ban Sok picked up the sewing and joined him in laughing.

"For the pine tree on the southern hill all is well, if it can survive the snow and frost. It can stay where it is; winter will go and spring will follow—if it survives it can be certain to grow thicker. That is the law of nature. But human law is different. If man stands up to hardships staying in one place, winter will never pass, and spring will not return to him. In the world of men one must go out and fight the hardships; by their own efforts men must dispel winter and usher in the spring. We formed the KNA; in the first round of the struggle we achieved success, though our trials were hard. However, that was but the first snow of early winter. The going will get colder, the winter more severe. There are fierce blizzards yet to come. A ferocious winter is at hand and our comrades, our organization and the people are waiting for me. They are anxiously hoping for me to give them what little help I can. So how can I sit out the winter in a warm room because I don't feel completely well as yet?"

"You are right, of course. I'll always support your idea. But where do you intend going this time?"

"To the border area on the Amnok-gang. I think I'll first go and settle at Chunggangjin."

"Chunggangjin?"

"It is a thousand *ri* north from here. And like the whole of our northern region, the terrain around Chunggangjin is rugged and the climate hard. And the people there are as tough as their land. Even in former days it was always one of strategic points in the north...."

He explained the geography and history of the border area. And as she listened she added more cotton padding to his clothes and socks; and decided that she must make him another suit.

Suddenly there were heavy steps outside, and loud cough-

ing. She got up from her work to open the door. She saw a tall man outside in the dark, walking across the snow into the yard. And instantly she recognized her elder brother in a *turumagi* and fur cap.

"Brother!" She cried under breath and went out onto the earthen bank.

"Why, is it you, brother!" Kim Hyong Jik jumped up and followed his wife.

"Brother!" Kang Jin Sok called in the same sonorous voice though it shook a little now—as he stepped briskly up onto the earthen bank.

"Brother!"

And Kim Hyong Jik's voice shook too. The two men held each other's hands in silence for a while. Then in a strained voice Kang Jin Sok said.

"You must have had a very bad time in prison...."

The elder brother-in-law's tone was serious, his few words expressing the indignation, anxiety and loneliness that had filled his heart. Kim Hyong Jik too felt great emotion.

"I was all right, but I left you a heavy load to carry...."

Kim Hyong Jik did not complete the sentence. Again the two men were silent.

"Oh, Brother Pang In Su is here too."

Kang Jin Sok looked round. Only then, Pang In Su, who had stood quietly outside in the dark during the brothers' reunion, walked up on the earthen bank and cried. "Mr. Kim!" but he could say no more. As he grasped his hand Kim Hyong Jik noticed that Pang was wearing a Western suit. His heart was filled with joy, as he grasped the hands of his two dearest comrades.

"Well, let us go inside."

The two visitors took off their fur caps and brushed snow off their clothes before entering the room.

Kang Jin Sok and Pang In Su offered greetings to Kim Hyong Jik's grandmother and parents in the main room. Kang Ban Sok went down to the kitchen where she built fire under the oven and washed one of the pots while Kim Hyong Jik's youngest brother went out into the snowy yard to keep watch.

The three comrades were seated in the end room. They just looked into each other's face with a thousand emotions,

not knowing where to begin, how to express their innermost thoughts.

"You look worn out, Mr. Kim."

Pang In Su spoke first, staring Kim Hyong Jik with a painful heart.

"Those damned blackguards, they arrested an innocent man and...." said Kang Jin Sok clenching his fists in fury.

"Oh well, I am as healthy as before. It's just that I got no suntan this year...," said Kim Hyong Jik brightly in an attempt to ease their worries.

"No, you are far from well. Don't worry about anything, just sit back and be well looked after until the thaw."

Kang Jin Sok sadly watched his brother-in-law's face.

"No, honestly, I'm quite all right. I was quite comfortable in prison; I spent the time reading a lot of books." Kim Hyong Jik laughed loudly leaving the two men greatly relieved.

"In fact, it's almost like a dream to see you safe and free," Kang Jin Sok said once again deeply moved.

"Truth to tell, we have anxiously waited for you to be freed. Now I feel as if a great pillar was strengthening my heart." Pang In Su's voice was sincere.

"Oh, don't say that. I could fight the enemy while I was in prison only because you comrades were protecting our organization."

Their words came straight from the heart. In those grim times in and out of prison the comrades had trusted and loved each other as never before.

"I was thrilled to hear how you fought in the court. 'Who is the criminal, one who usurped another's country through swindle, fraud, murder and robbery or the owner of the lost country who tries to reclaim it? Answer before all the laws of humanity!' As you said this, they tell the Japs were so completely at a loss, they only moved their lips like carps in water. Ha, ha, ha...."

Kang Jin Sok's sides shook.

"You must never be defeated in argument by the rascals, brother. Now, how is everybody all around the country and abroad?"

"They are all right. They all worried about you, and everyone I met asked me to convey this to you...."

Only then Kang Jin Sok remembered and unwrapped his

bundle and took out a large paper package, saying, "This contains restoratives."

Kim Hyong Jik received the package silently with both hands. After a good while, he put it down and said.

"I thank you. I accept this manifestation of their love with gratitude, as an encouragement."

Kang Jin Sok then began telling about the situation in Chientao.

"...As you instructed, Won Dong Yu and Cha Go Ryun's units went a bit farther inland and stationed their platoons in the adjacent villages, to carry out the policy of protecting the people's lives and property and helping them. The coordination between the two units is excellent. Cha Go Ryun's unit and a lot of young people from homeland receive training now. Hong Jun Gol and Duk Bu are with Cha Go Ryun's unit and are very concerned for you, brother."

"Is Duk Bu studying well?" Kim Hyong Jik asked, his face brightening.

"If anything, he is overzealous. Mr. Hong Jun Gol is bustling around trying to build up a military academy. Miss Ok Rim is teaching Korean, history and geography at Sahoe Chungmyong School...."

"So all of them are fighting well? You must have worked very hard, brother."

"Not at all. I could handle my work because you kept guiding me even from behind the bars. But the situation in Chientao is by no means easy and quite a lot of problems remain unsolved."

Kang Jin Sok explained the developing crisis in Chientao and the present condition of the organizations and the comrades in the country. Our organizations in Pyongyang and Unryul which had suffered the greatest losses had all been restored and all the local organizations in Seoul, Kyongsang, Cholla and Pyongan Provinces had been working steadily.

Kim Hyong Jik was well satisfied with the two comrades' work and made the following comment.

"...The present internal and external situation proves still more clearly that all our policies have been sound. Especially, the anti-Japanese struggles we organized last summer were well timed and well carried out. Look. For the two years since the end of the World War there have been clear signs of a new

conflict between the Western powers and Japan as we had expected. It will come out into the open at the coming peace conference; you will notice squabbles behind the scenes between Japan, which will not budge from the position it occupied in Asia during the war, and America and European powers who will not tolerate this. And with the Socialist October Revolution in Russia last year, one-sixth of the world seceded from the old world, which has thrown these rivals into greater confusion, and sharpened people's revolutionary awareness in East and West, and this awareness is growing every day. This is also graphically reflected in our home situation. Our people who drew hope and self-confidence from the anti-Japanese struggle of the KNA, have witnessed the great Russian revolution, and are aspiring more and more for independence and for revolution."

"That's right, Mr. Kim. All our comrades say that now they feel that they are seeing the advent of the decisive moment you predicted." Pang In Su was expressing the unanimous opinion of the comrades in the various organizations he had visited. Kim Hyong Jik went on to say.

"Our immediate task is to carry out the KNA's policy of action still more energetically so as to build up our own forces with which to achieve national liberation when the decisive hour arrives...."

He then went on to explain the new policy he had conceived in prison and, in particular, of stepping up activities among the workers and peasants.

Again Kang Jin Sok and Pang In Su saw before their eyes the bright prospects of the revolutionary movement.

Kim Hyong Jik put forward specific policies for discussion.

They included moving the centre of leadership to the border area on the Amnok-gang to supervise and give coordinated leadership to the political and military activities at home and in Chientao and ways and means of finally smashing the idea of relying on external forces and ways of skilfully combining the legal and illegal struggle.

It was nearly dawn when Kim Hyong Jik parted with two men on the top of the southern hill. Great flakes of snow were still falling.

"Well, when do you intend to leave, Brother?" inquired

Kang Jin Sok with a worried look at Kim Hyong Jik who still did not look well.

"Tomorrow."

"Why, what are you talking about? No, you mustn't. How can you travel through this snow in your condition?"

"Mr. Kim, I'm afraid you must work at home and look after yourself a bit till spring." Pang In Su was eagerly persuasive.

"Thank you. But after all, wasn't my illness caused by idleness? Ha, ha."

"I know nobody can change your resolve. But please postpone your journey by one day. On my way back I'll drop in at Naedong and send Yong Chun and Gap Dol to you. Please let them come with you. I was there on my way here, and their parents pleaded with me, and the boys themselves kept asking me to help them realize their desire to take up arms and fight like Duk Bu," said Pang In Su.

"Is that so? My pupils will be quite grown up now, eh? Good. I'll do that. But don't send them here, for in any case I planned to go there on my way, I'll meet the people there."

"Then, Brother, please take care of yourself...."

Kang Jin Sok held Kim Hyong Jik's both hands. He had been put in charge of activities at home.

3

The night was advancing.

Kim Hyong Jik was explaining his plan for departure to his parents and the rest of his family.

"...For these reasons I'll have to go on a long journey. Please forgive me for failing to look after you, Grandmother, Father, Mother, and particularly, for leaving my young brothers behind."

Kim Hyong Jik could speak no further, for emotion was welling up in his heart. But then it was needless to give tedious details to his old grandmother and parents.

Father was sitting calmly, gazing at the dancing flame of the lamp, puffing at his pipe. Grandmother, Father and

Mother, Duljjae and Sam Son (Kim Hyong Rok and Kim Hyong Gwon), his wife, sister and sister-in-law—the whole family was gathered in the room. And none of them spoke a word. Jung Son was asleep beside Grandmother in the warmest corner of the room and his breathing was distinct. Seated side by side with her sister-in-law Kang Ban Sok stared from her father-in-law to her husband.

The silence lay heavy on Kim Hyong Jik's heart. He would be leaving at daybreak, and he regretted that he had made his intention known a few hours ahead. On the other hand he felt light-hearted because the news was broken. He even felt himself getting calmer as he listened for words from the deep and tongue-tied father.

The silence continued. Now his brothers, sister-in-law and even Grandmother watched Father. The snowstorm was howling furiously outside. Father blew out the smoke he had drawn deep into his lungs.

"Are you leaving right away," Father's voice sounded hollow.

"Yes, I want to go at the crack of dawn." Kim Hyong Jik replied. His father jerked his head to look at his son.

"Go."

Kim Hyong Jik did not know what to say.

"You needn't worry about the house. Do as you please," his father added.

"Father...."

Kim Hyong Jik muttered and dropped his head.

"But there is one thing I am not happy about," his father went on in the same calm, austere voice. "You've been working in the independence movement for several years. You are no longer young either. And I don't know exactly what you are doing, but I can imagine you are leading quite a few people. So you should not be tied to your family, you should be completely dedicated to the independence movement. If you have such a great plan you must go and put it into practice without delay, you needn't dillydally, worrying over family matters."

Father's stern tones were permeated with a warm, deep love. Raising his face Kim Hyong Jik again called "Father!" in a tight choking voice. "I'll remember."

It was all he could say; he was overwhelmed by Father's affection and great trust.

"Your father is right, grandson. Your Grandfather used to say similar things to your father. Though you were given life by your parents, you must dedicate your body to your country—that is what he used to say. So go and do your great work, and never worry about your family," said Grandmother, still sitting at her spinning wheel. Kim Hyong Jik only felt a great warmth in his heart.

"Grandmother, I will."

"You have nothing to worry about, brother. We cannot help you in the independence movement, but at least we two brothers can run the household. Do not worry about that, please. Isn't that right, Hyong Gwon?"

Kim Hyong Rok turned and slapped Sam Son on the shoulder.

"Yes, indeed! Brother, as soon as I grow up I'll join your independence movement!" Sam Son exclaimed, his bright eyes shining.

"Yes, when you grow up, go to your brother and fight at his side, ha, ha." Father answered for his eldest son, laughing open-heartedly. Kang Ban Sok stared at her husband with eyes brimming with tears. Kim Hyong Jik felt his family's warm love filling his heart.

As the night grew late the snowstorms became fiercer and slapped the papered windows. It was long past midnight but every window of Kim Hyong Jik's house was red with light. From the kitchen came the light sound of the mortar and the rattling of dishes being washed. Mother and sister-in-law were preparing breakfast and food for the journey.

In the end-room Father was making a pair of flower-patterned straw-sandals for Jung Son. In the middle room his wife and Grandmother were fixing his clothes under the lamp.

With deep emotions Kim Hyong Jik heard all these sounds mixed with the furious roar of the blizzard outside, as he talked to his brothers. He had begun with his advice that after his departure they must help their old father and mother manage the household and the farm. And he had explained the present situation at home and abroad and the prospects of the independence movement. Also, he advised them earnestly that however hard pressed by family affairs and farming they must not neglect their own education and that they must also help the neighbours.

Daylight came, and the blizzard still blew.

Having breakfasted early Kim Hyong Jik prepared for his journey. He had put on a large jacket padded thickly with cotton and his gaiters. Kang Ban Sok helped him in his preparations without a word. Jung Son, who had been watching his father putting on the gaiters, asked abruptly.

"Papa, are you going to fight the Japs again?" Kim Hyong Jik stopped working on the gaiters and looked around at his son.

"Yes."

The father smiled. Staring thoughtfully at his father Jung Son asked another question.

"Can't I come too, Papa?"

"You?!" The father lifted up his head. The son's eyes were pleading as he looked him full in the face. Kim Hyong Jik nodded his head.

"You will come. You and Mama will come too. When I ask you to come, come to me with Mama."

"Really?!"

Jung Son shouted in huge delight.

"Why not? Papa has never told you a lie, has he?"

Kang Ban Sok who was beside him said this with a smile.

"How nice, Papa! Is Mama going to fight the Japs too?"

"Of course. Mama will fight, so will you and Chol Ju when he is grown up, and so will your uncles. Everybody in our family must fight the Japs. But until I ask you to come you must obey your Mama and learn well."

"Ye-e-s."

Jung Son answered briskly and called to his uncle, ran into the main room. Smiling at his wife Kim Hyong Jik rose to his feet and opened the door to go out onto the earthen bank. The wind blew dry snow into the room. Kim Hyong Jik put on a pair of bast sandals and tightened the strings. The door of the main room rattled open, and out into the still dark yard came Grandmother, Mother, and Kim Hyong Rok carrying his brother's bundle, his sister and all the rest of the family. Only Father was nowhere to be seen.

Kim Hyong Jik stood by the door, and for a while straightened himself. The rustling of straw ropes being twisted could be heard inside the room. The sound touched Kim Hyong Jik's heart because he knew Father had twisted the straw ropes all night through, and not only because the family badly needed hands. Kim Hyong Jik opened the door quietly. The father

stopped working and looked at his son. For two years—one while in Kangdong and another while behind the bars—he had not been able to attend his father, and during the two years his hair round his temples had gone grey and his face more deeply furrowed. Kim Hyong Jik recalled warmly what Father had said the previous night.

He made a deep bow.

"Ready to leave then?" Father asked curtly.

He rose and came out onto the earthen bank without a word and Kim Hyong Jik stepped down into the yard. Still standing on the earthen bank, his father gazed into the sky blurred with the worsening snowstorm.

"The weather looks pretty wild...."

Saying this as if to himself the father bent to look at his son standing in the yard.

"I've just one more bit of advice for you."

"Yes."

"Wherever you go you must win people's good opinion if you are to attain your great goal. There is an old saying, 'Even the dragon cannot go into heaven unless it has won the people's good opinion.' And man can only achieve great things if he helps people and wins their good opinion."

"Yes."

"And do not worry about your family. A man who is worrying about his family cannot do great deeds. A man should fight and die on the field of battle for his country and his people; only then he will be loyal to the country, and meet his obligation as man."

"I'll remember."

Father's austere words went through every fibre of Kim Hyong Jik's body. It was the greatest encouragement, the deepest love such as no one else in the world could give him.

"Go." Father said, softly.

"Farewell, Father...."

Kim Hyong Jik could say no more and made a deep bow. He stood up straight and tried to bid farewell to Grandmother and Mother, but they and the rest of the family were already walking towards the front gate. He followed them unhurriedly. Villagers were gathering outside the gate, having heard that he was going. So surrounded by the villagers and by his family, he reached the entrance of the village. On the sloping road on the outskirts of the village he offered words of parting to his

grandmother and mother and said good-bye to the villagers, and patting his son's head for a while, he turned and went. The family and villagers stood on the roadside for a long time to see him off. His father stood outside the house, looking up at the sky where the blizzard was raging.

Kim Hyong Jik walked slowly down the sloping snow-swept road. The dark pine forest on the southern hill, bruised by cold swayed violently in the snowstorm. The sky over the north where Kim Hyong Jik was going was shrouded in the blizzard.

Kim Hyong Jik strode ahead vigorously. The green pine forest on the southern hill suffering under the massive weight of the snow moved more wildly as if to see him off on his long journey.

For a minute he stood before the old pine tree that he had noticed the day before. He watched it. Every time a gust of wind hit it, the tree bent so low down the cliff that it seemed about to be uprooted, but it writhed in fury and arose again.

Farewell, green pine tree on the southern hill; I will return soon—in the spring of resurrection, a warm and bright spring! He said softly to himself and strode firmly forward in the teeth of the whirling blizzard.

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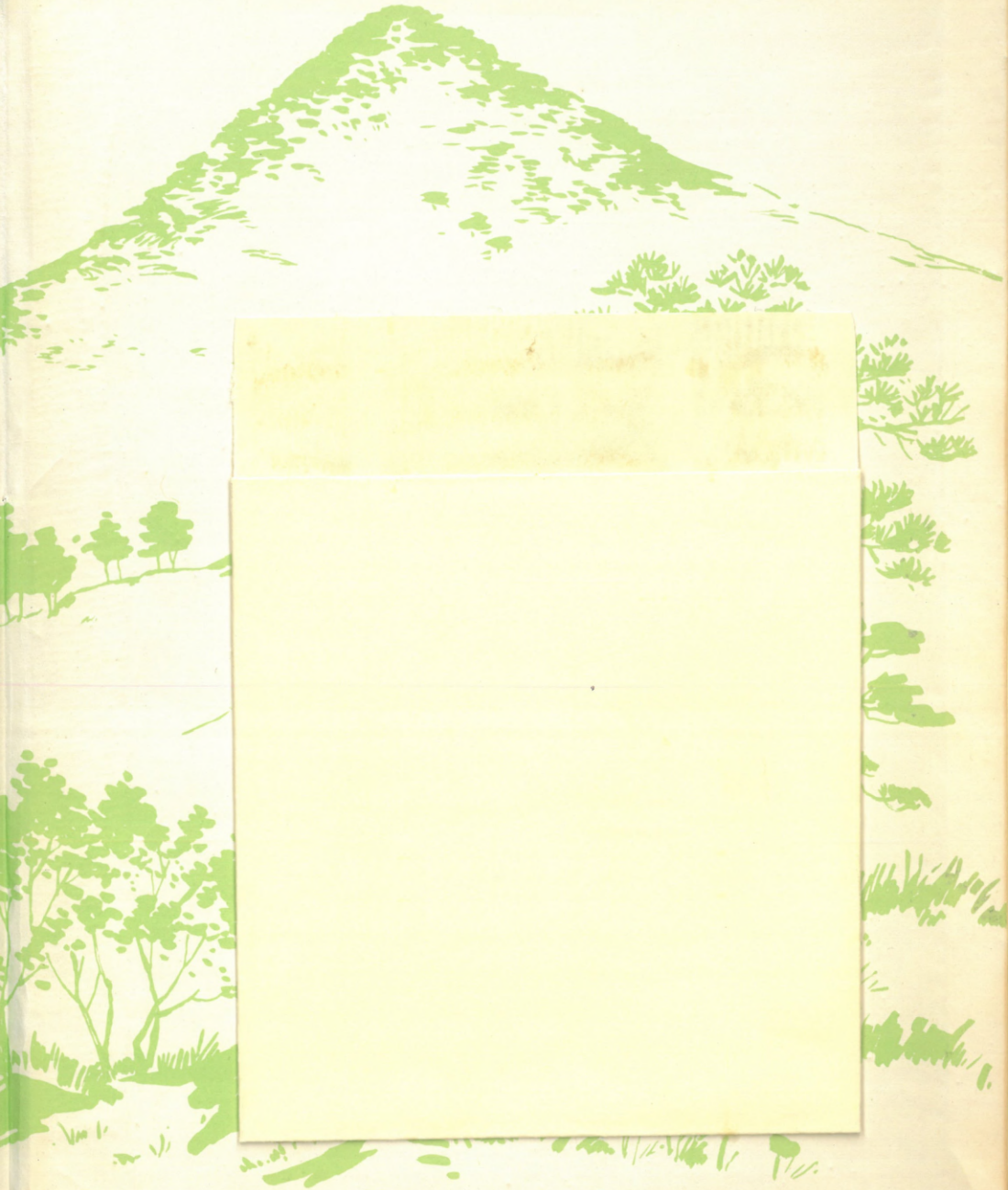
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